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FAITH AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE NATURE
OF FAITH TO THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

A
Dissertation
Presented To The Faculty Of
The School Of Theology At Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For The Degree
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

by
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June 1974

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This dissertation, written by

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of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

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"My concern is to communicate to others, for their examination, confirmation, or admonition the insight I think I have attained."

MARTIN KÄHLER

PREFACE

In the Spring of 1973 I was enrolled in a course entitled "Christology From the Apostolic Fathers to Chalcedon." In that course we read, among other writings, a section from Adolf von Harnack's History of Dogma. That reading was hardly intelligible at the time. However, the point that caught my attention was the relationship of Christology and soterology. The point being that in theological formulation what is the proper movement between the two--Christology to soteriology or soteriology to Christology. Does one begin with a doctrine of Christ and then look for implications for the solution of man's predicament, or does he start with a solution to man's problems and then seek a Christ that coincides? It was this problem of the relationship of Christology to soteriology that was to be the topic of this dissertation.

After considerable research and reflection it became obvious, particularly after the chairman of my committee pointed it out, that this topic was much too encompassing for a Doctor of Ministry dissertation. I therefore, decided to narrow my focus to the present work. The present effort is not, however, a complete sacrifice of the initial project. Faith and the Christian life are but

rubrics within the categories of Christology and soteriology respectively. Christology implies faith, just as soteriology implies a mode of life. I hope to return to this larger project at a future time.

I would like to express my appreciation to Professors Ekkehard Mühlenberg and Patricia M. Doyle, my dissertation committee, for their help in guiding my research. A special word of appreciation and gratitude is due Professor D. Mühlenberg, chairman of my committee. He has given an inordinate amount of time to me and this project. Without his assistance and kindness this dissertation would not have taken shape. On the other hand if I had taken fuller account of his suggestions and insights this work would have been much improved.

Several of my peers here at The School of Theology and at Claremont Graduate School have been helpful in the early stages of this work. When I was endeavoring to write on Christology and soteriology, the germ of this present work, H. Stanley Smith and David McCreary cheerfully contributed their insights and criticism. Joseph A. Deegan and Lesile Muray of Claremont Graduate School attempted to help as well.

In any writing project there is always someone in the background that makes the effort possible in a realistic sense. That someone for this project is my wife

Joan. She has stood the brunt of the financial burden leading up to and enabling this dissertation. To her I owe appreciation.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the greatest single religious insight from the giants of the Protestant Reformation was their stress on the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith. It was Martin Luther's enlightenment that the essence of the Christian message lies in the words of the apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans: 'ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζῶεται' "He who through faith is righteous shall live."¹ Theologically this was expressed in the term "justification by faith."

It is the intention of this dissertation to look at differing concepts of the structure or nature of faith to see how they determine the life of those "who through faith are righteous." The issue that concerns is to some extent, the question: What does Christian faith really mean? What does it mean to say "I believe in Jesus"? In other words, how does the meaning of this affirmation affect the life of the person who makes it? As Gerhard Ebeling has put it: "the criterion for understanding what Christian faith is

¹Romans 1:17.

about is to be found in the actual affecting of our real situation"² Ebeling's point is that we know what a person's faith is by looking at his life. This idea is tied to Rudolf Bultmann's notion that faith is "radical obedience," to the Word.³ Here the life of faith must be a radical life, radically opposed to one's former life. If one's actions are deemed "radical obedience," or not, then it will be possible to ascertain the faith of the individual. It may or may not be that the meaning of faith is discoverable in the real life situation. In this paper, our purposes, the reverse approach seems more instructive; to look at the structure of faith and see how this understanding is determinative of the Christian life.

Ebeling warns that "It is both a necessary and a hazardous undertaking to put the question about the nature of the Christian faith, or, rather to face the question."⁴ It is hazardous because the question includes a definite kind of participation. It could turn out that in asking about the nature of faith the questioner is asked in return about his own understanding of faith. Thus the questioner, or those who would entertain the question, share in it, and

²Gerhard Ebeling, The Nature of Faith (Philadelphia: Fontana Library, 1967), p. 16.

³Cf., Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of The New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 316ff.

⁴Ebeling, p. 9.

are then part of the question, in a definite way. Ebeling expresses the point when he writes:

since I am both the one who asks and part of what is being asked about, I am at the same time the one who is asked, challenged for an answer, and who has to be answerable for the answer that is to be given.⁵

It can be seen that the necessity and the hazard of the question of the nature of faith are intertwined. It is necessary that a true understanding of the nature of faith be investigated in order that one is not lead astray. It is hazardous to ask the question because one might come to see how adrift he is in his understanding. Ebeling writes:

For this is the risk which one takes in raising this question. It is possible that on a closer examination things are different from what one had hitherto imagined. Ideas that we had thought to be self-evident could break-up. Our attitude to the Christian faith and thereby our own existence could begin to move in a way that we did not like at all. A transformation in our thinking and understanding could be demanded which we would not know how to endure.⁶

Anyone seriously concerned about the Christian faith should realize the urgency of the question concerning an accurate understanding. A faith which shirks the question of understanding is in danger of floating adrift. Therefore, "We must take courage for critical thought"⁷ in approaching the nature of faith.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

⁷Ibid., p. 18.

One should not be misunderstood in questioning the nature of faith. My questioning is a questioning from, as it were, "within the circle." That is to say, as one committed to the Christian message. I am however deeply concerned that my commitment be one in the right direction and with the right focus. If one is to be a disciple of Christ, a follower in the truth, one must have a correct understanding. And that understanding must be seen to be derived from a considered examination.

Some may ask if it is not possible to answer the question about the nature of faith with all clarity and definiteness. The answer would be, yes. But the question arising from this answer is whose understanding of faith will be affirmed as definitive. Can one accept an understanding which maintains that faith is "an empty sack whose nature it is to serve as a container for specific objects"?⁸ Here the question about the nature of faith is both clear and definite, being: What must I believe? Or, on the other hand, can one ascribe to a view which holds that faith does not permit itself any extrinsic basis in objective facts, but rather is something of a "leap in the dark"?

As can be seen, from but these two examples, there are divergences in the understanding of the nature of faith.

⁸Ibid., p. 19.

One insists that faith involves beliefs as assent to revealed truths resident in the Bible. While, the other suggests that faith is without content, and manifests itself only in an existential relationship to life. The individual moment being the determining factor in the enactment of faith.

These positions represent two traditional views of the nature of faith. The first, could be called the "propositional" view. Here the content of revelation is understood to be a body of truths expressed in statements or propositions. According to this view, "Revelation may be defined as the communication of some truth by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of nature."⁹ Correspondingly, faith is man's obedient acceptance of the divinely revealed truth. It follows, therefore, in this view, that the Bible is the place where those truths are authoritatively recorded. The second view of faith, on the other hand, is a "non-propositional" view. It argues that the content of revelation is not a body of truths about God, but God himself acting in history.¹⁰ Thus religious significance is found superimposed upon the natural significance of the situation

⁹G.H. Joyce, "Revelation," The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Appleton, 1912), XIII, 1.

¹⁰William Temple, Nature, Man and God (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 322.

in the believer's experience. In the confines of this view theological propositions, as such, are not revealed, but represent human attempts to understand the significance of revelatory events. Whereas in the propositional view, the Bible is customarily referred to as "the Word of God"--meaning in practice "the words of God"--in the non-propositional view only Christ is called "the Word." The Bible is not itself the Word of God, but is rather the primary and indispensable witness to the Word.¹¹

This dissertation will examine these two traditional views of the nature of faith to see how they affect, or manifest themselves, in Christian life. In order to do this the views of three prominent theologians will be discussed in regard to faith. The first of these Martin Kähler was influential on such theological leaders of the twentieth century as Barth, Bultmann and Tillich. Rudolf Bultmann, the noted New Testament theologian of this century, and the last scholar to be treated will be Wolfhard Pannenberg, a prominent theological scholar to emerge from Germany in recent years not associated with either the Barthian or Bultmannian schools.

¹¹Cf., John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956); and H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1941).

Martin Kähler was the leading forerunner of Dialectical Theology, of which Bultmann is a proponent and which emerged in the early part of the twentieth century. Dialectical Theology can be understood in part as a reaction against nineteenth century historicism¹² and in particular the *Leban-Jesus-Forschung*. With the relativizing factor resident in the historical critical method, history, as a medium of revelation, became questionable.¹³ It was Kähler who was one of the first to react in force against this attack of historicism. Kähler emphasized that it was the kerygmatic intention of the Biblical texts that was important, not their historical verifiability. The idea was proclaimed, particularly later in Dialectical Theology, that faith does not depend on history as a basis, because faith is a vacuum filled not from history below, but from revelation above. History as an approach to faith was

¹²Historicism is a name given to that view which regards any person, event, culture, institution, or philosophy as capable of being explained solely in terms of its historical antecedents. Historicism became a theological problem when it was claimed that Christianity, too, must be explained as an expression of the historical forces making for Western culture and had, therefore, no claim to absolute significance.

¹³Cf., John E. Benson, "The History of the Historical Critical Method in the Church: A Survey," Dialog, XII (Spring 1973), 94-103. Werner Georg Kümmel, The New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972). Gerhard Ebeling, "The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism," in his Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 17-62.

consequently denigrated by Dialectical Theology. Historical concerns were buried beneath an avalanche of theological rhetoric, such as, "word of God," "Kerygma," "personal encounter," by successors to Kähler.

The stage had been set for this development by Kähler's repudiation of the idea that revelation could be historically verified in his fight against the *Leban-Jesu-Forschung* in the late nineteenth century. However, he never intended to loosen the link between revelation and history as such.¹⁴ It was Martin Kähler's stress on the preached Christ as the real Christ, that opened the way for Rudolf Bultmann to develop the concept of the Christ of the kerygma as a symbol of faith, to the neglect of the historical Jesus and his significance for theology. Bultmann's "theology of the Word" or "Kerygmatic theology" has therefore, its direct antecedent in Kähler's stress on the kerygmatic intention of the biblical texts. Thus, for Bultmann the proclamation is central and primary and not history.

The separation of faith and history is, for Wolfhard Pannenberg, a fatal mistake. For, faith cannot live from a kerygma detached from its historical basis and content. Not only does Pannenberg disagree with Bultmann,

¹⁴Cf., Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Kerygma and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), I, 82, n. 2.

he is clearly in disagreement with Kähler's idea that revelation is suprahistorical. Revelation, rather, according to Pannenberg, comes not merely in or through history but as history.¹⁵ Pannenberg writes:

History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology. All theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity and through humanity with his whole creation--the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Jesus Christ.¹⁶

An examination of Martin Kähler's confrontation with the Life-of-Jesus movement will set the stage from which two basic understandings of the nature of faith can be derived. It was the conviction of many in the nineteenth century that faith could be corrected by, if not based on, historical research. Each biographer of the life of Jesus acclaimed his work as one which could serve as a true and accurate representation of faith. However, each biography presented a slightly different picture. This led to an inevitable relativizing of faith. Questions arose from this position as to the true and proper basis of faith. Kähler proclaimed faith to be based on the "picture" of Jesus in the Bible. At this point the possibility of a distinction between faith understood as propositional or as

¹⁵Cf., Wolfhard Pannenberg (ed.), Revelation As History (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

¹⁶Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology, I, 15.

non-propositional arises. The issue concerns how Kähler's idea is to be understood. If faith is based on the "picture" of Jesus in the kerygma does this mean that the propositional content of the "picture" becomes the ground of faith requiring assent, or does it mean that faith is based on the proclamation of the "picture" as an address confronting one with a decision for or against faith? In the latter view faith is basically contentless in the sense of being without particular propositions to be believed. The issue then involves the basis of faith.

The question of the basis of faith underlies the question of faith's nature. No matter what one decides as to the nature of faith he is still confronted by the question of the basis of his decision. Wolfhard Pannenberg deals particularly with this issue.

An exposition of Martin Kähler's position will serve as background for the development of the two alternate conceptions of the nature of faith.

Chapter II

THE SEARCH FOR AN INVULNERABLE AREA

Martin Kähler in The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ¹ was concerned with "the subject of confessing the living Christ." His primary concern was with two questions: (1) How does Christianity become certain of its historic Christ? and (2) Do Christians value the Bible because it contains historical documents? The background from which these questions emerge is the "Life-of-Jesus Movement" of the nineteenth century.

THE LIFE OF JESUS MOVEMENT

The Life-of-Jesus movement has become known in the twentieth century as "the quest for the historical Jesus." This is an expression which has become familiar to the twentieth century as the English title of Albert Schweitzer's book Von Reimarus zu Wrede.² The English

¹Martin Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

²Albert Schweitzer, Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906); English translation: The Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: Black, 1910).

title, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, is a poetic rendering of the German subtitle, which reads literally: "A History of Research upon the Life of Jesus." The Quest for the historical Jesus has come to stand for the attempt to discover the personality and career of Jesus of Nazareth as a figure in human history by the application of modern methods of historical research to the New Testament writings.³

The quest for the historical Jesus was an attempt to reconstruct the ministry of Jesus with an understanding of its inner and outer development. It presupposed a

³The literature on the subject is extensive to say the least. The following are among the more central books and articles: Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus . . .; Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus; Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in his Essays on New Testament Themes (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 15-47; T.W. Manson, "The Life of Jesus: some tendencies in present-day research," in W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 211-221; Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1954); Paul Althaus, The So-Called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), in its U.S. edition, Fact and Faith in the Kerygma of Today (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960); James M. Robinson, A New Question of the Historical Jesus (Naper-ville: Allenson, 1959); Hanz Conzelmann, "The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research," in Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (eds.), The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ (New York: Abingdon, 1964), pp. 54-68; Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in Braaten and Harrisville, pp. 15-42; Gerhard Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus and the Problem of Christology," in his Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 288-304; Nils A. Dahl, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (eds.), Kerygma and History (New

greater or lesser degree of contrast between the words and acts of Jesus during his earthly ministry and the theological portrait which emerged during the succeeding generations.

The chief motivation behind the quest was to get back behind the dogmata of orthodoxy to the original teachings of Jesus and thus acquire a corrective to the church's version of Christianity.

Factors Leading to the Movement

Two movements were factors leading to the movement. First the rise of historical research in the eighteenth century, and second, the fact that the church's doctrine of Christ began to lose its hold on the minds of men. The fusion of these two movements led scholars to deal with the question of the Jesus of history.

It had been assumed for centuries that ecclesiastical dogma had given the final and unalterable answer to man's faith, and those who did not accept them could not be saved. The rise of historical research undermined unqualified acceptance of Christological dogma in two ways. The first was by demonstrating the dogmas dependence on Greek philosophical categories and second, by showing that the

York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 138-171; Hermann Diem, "The Earthly Jesus and The Christ of Faith," in Braaten and Harrisville, Kerygma and History, pp. 197-211.

flesh-and-blood quality of the Jesus of history had waned into a Christological system of abstract concepts. The transition from the Jesus of the Gospels to the Christ of the dogmata appeared as no longer unquestionably valid and binding upon later generations of Christians. Suspicion was aroused, first in scholarly circles and then among the educated laity, that Jesus of Nazareth was perhaps the most misunderstood personality of all time, and perhaps least understood by his closest followers.

Shift from Dogmatics to History

This new interest in Jesus represented the beginning of a shift from a dogmatic to an historical perspective. Scholars wanted to know the actual personality of Jesus, not merely what his followers said or believed about him.

Thus, near the end of the eighteenth century (1778) Hermann Samuel Reimarus began the quest of the historical Jesus.⁴ From then on a long series of new faces of Jesus were sketched with imaginative variations by the biographers.

⁴Cf., Hermann Samuel Reimarus, The Goals of Jesus and His Disciples (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

AGAINST THE LIFE OF JESUS MOVEMENT

Against this background Kähler confronted his readers with the question: "What do you think of the Christ?" (Matt. 22:42), and said,

the answer given to this question depends, not on what proceeds from our hearts, but on what flesh and blood cannot reveal (Matt. 16.17), what no eye has seen nor ear hear, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him (I Cor. 2.9).⁵

Kähler was convinced that the reconstruction of the historical Jesus⁶ by biographers would be of no help in affirming Jesus as Lord. In fact "the historical Jesus of modern authors conceals from us the living Christ."⁷ In further disdain Kähler said: "I regard the entire Life-of-Jesus movement as a blind alley."⁸

⁵Kähler, p. 42.

⁶The term "historical Jesus" is a technical expression. Ebeling explains it in his article "The Question of the Historical Jesus . . . ," pp. 290-295. "The adjective 'historical' has first of all a critical and polemical character. It expresses the modern view of truth--a view which compels us where history is concerned to make a certain distinction between the tradition of history and the facts of history, between the picture that has been handed down of an event and the reality of the events itself. . . . 'Historical,' then means the appropriate method of perceiving historic reality. 'Historical Jesus' is, therefore, really an abbreviation for: Jesus as he comes to be known by strictly historical methods, in contrast to any alteration and touching up to which he has been subjected in the traditional Jesus picture." p. 290.

⁷Kähler, p. 43.

⁸Ibid., p. 46.

Kähler's self-imposed task was a twofold one:

(1) to criticize and reject incorrect aspects of this approach to the life of Jesus, and (2) to establish the validity of an alternative approach. The latter, he said, was the more important.⁹

The Impossibility of a
Biography of Jesus

In writing against the Life-of-Jesus movement Kähler stresses the impossibility of a biography of Jesus. However, he begins by noting a legitimacy in the movement, "in so far as it sets the Bible against an abstract dogmatism."¹⁰ This legitimacy was short lived for "It becomes illegitimate as soon as it begins to read and direct the Bible without having acquired a clear understanding of the special nature of the problem and the peculiar significance of Scripture for such understanding."¹¹ The "special nature of the problem" appears to be the fact that the details of the life of Jesus before his public ministry are inconsequential. For, according to Kähler,

If we believe with Christian doctrine in the Christ who is more than a mere man in his essence, his mission, and his present function--i.e., if we believe in the supra-historical Savior--then the

⁹Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹Ibid.

historical Jesus acquires for us that incomparable worth that moves us to confess before the biblical picture of Jesus.¹²

To Kähler what is important is the suprahistorical Savior. Knowledge of personal details of the life of Jesus will add little or nothing to this significance.

The "supra-historical"¹³ Savior was defined by Kähler as:

a term coined to designate what, to be sure, would not even exist apart from history but whose significance is not exhausted in the historical effects of a particular link in the chain of history or in the beginnings of a new historical movement, because in the supra-historical what is universally valid is joined to the historical to become an effective presence.¹⁴

The suprahistorical Savior then is that historical figure who embodies the suprahistorical revelation of God. Kähler will later call this "the biblical picture of the historic Christ."

The peculiar significance of Scripture that Kähler mentions was discussed at greater length later in his book and will be dealt with later in this paper.

What Kähler calls scientific assertions rule out, for him, the possibility of writing a biography of

¹²Ibid., p. 47.

¹³See Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), I, 59.

¹⁴Kähler, p. 47.

Jesus.¹⁵ First "we do not possess any sources for a Life of Jesus which a historian can accept as reliable and adequate."¹⁶ In other words, "we have no sources for a biography of Jesus of Nazareth which measure up to the standards of contemporary historical science."¹⁷ Second, "Our sources, that is, the Gospels . . . cannot be traced with certainty to eyewitnesses."¹⁸ "And finally, these sources appear in two basic forms whose variations must . . . awaken serious doubts about the faithfulness of the recollections."¹⁹ These scientific statements only go to demonstrate Kähler's contention:

The New Testament presentations were not written for the purpose of describing how Jesus developed. They show him manifesting himself and playing an active role, but not making confessions about his inner life Therefore, the Gospels do not invite the drawing of a *posteriori* conclusions concerning the exact nature of Jesus' earlier development.²⁰

Kähler, therefore, in disdain asks:

What is the Life-Of-Jesus research really searching for? In going behind Jesus Christ as he is portrayed in the church's tradition--and this means

¹⁵It was the assumption of the biographers of Jesus that they could present the development of Jesus' personality, or the movement of His inner life.

¹⁶Kähler, p. 48.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 49.

²⁰Ibid., p. 51.

also behind the New Testament picture of Christ--it wants to get at the real Jesus as he actually existed in all those respects that all or some, might consider important or indispensable, or often only desirable or titillating ("How interesting!")²¹

Kähler further asks about the ultimate reason behind the Life-Of-Jesus movement. "Why do we seek to know the figure of Jesus?" he asks. He answers rhetorically: "I rather think it is because we believe him when he says, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14.9), because we see in him the revelation of the invisible God."²² Kähler, here, makes a shift away from what he had earlier said about the quest for the historical Jesus. He had noted earlier: "Originally it [the quest] was used to set the biblical Christ over against the dogmatic Christ."²³ However, in light of the discovery that the synoptics Gospels, assumed to be the source for an accurate picture of the Christ, were discovered to be conscious and deliberate results of authors "the only course remaining was to embark on the quest for the historical Jesus who was faintly discernible behind the primitive Christian reports. . . ."²⁴ Rather than focusing on the critical intention of the quest for the historical Jesus Kähler turns to speak of

²¹Ibid., pp. 57-58.

²²Ibid., p. 58.

²³Ibid., p. 44.

²⁴Ibid.

revelation. In rebuttal as to why one seeks the historical Jesus he asked: "Now if the Word became flesh in Jesus, which is the revelation, the flesh or the Word?"²⁵ In other words which has the most significance for us--the person or the work of Jesus?²⁶

Kähler perhaps would not like to put the question in this manner, but it nevertheless seems appropriate.²⁷ In a footnote he remarks: "The person well versed in Scripture will not answer that it is the flesh which reveals the Word which is revealed, for precisely the Word itself is the revelation."²⁸ Nevertheless, he held that it is the Word which is the revelation, and the most important, and asked "Which is the more important for us, that wherein Jesus is like us [the flesh] or that wherein he was and is totally different from us [the Word]. Is it not the latter, namely, that which he offers us" ²⁹

In a manner reminiscent of Kierkegaard, Kähler contends:

Do I really need to know more of him than what Paul "delivered to (the Corinthians) as of first importance, what (he) also received, that Christ died

²⁵Ibid., p. 58.

²⁶Cf., Ibid., p. 95.

²⁷Cf., Ibid., pp. 59, 60.

²⁸Ibid., p. 58, n. 22.

²⁹Ibid., p. 58, cf., 59.

for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture, and that he appeared" (I Cor. 15.3)? This is the good news brought in the name of God. . . . This is the witness and confession of faith which has overcome the world (I John 5.4). If I have all this I do not need additional information as to the precise details of Jesus' life and death.³⁰

The Gospels as the Record of Jesus' Impact

With only the impact of Jesus as important the Gospels as the record of that impact become central:

We believe in him because we know him; we have him as we know him; we know him because he dwelt among us . . . and chose for himself witnesses through whose word we are to believe in him.³¹

Therefore, the reason we commune with the Jesus of our Gospels is because it is through them that we learn to know that same Jesus whom, with the eyes of faith and in our prayers, we meet at the right hand of God³²

Self-evident here is the idea that we come to know Jesus, or come to faith through the proclamation of the Gospels. It may be that Kähler, in the quote above, is suggesting two means of approaching Jesus, one, through the Gospel picture and another through our "eyes of faith and in our prayers." Whether this distinction is real or not, it is nevertheless beyond doubt that the Gospels themselves are

³⁰Ibid., p. 60.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 61.

the primary means for communion with Jesus. Kähler supports this position as follows:

The Bible confronts each of us with an Either/Or.³³

. . . the Bible proclaims Christ, proclaims him from and in faith and we in turn come to faith through its faith.³⁴

. . . to commune with Jesus one seeks nothing more than the biblical presentation.³⁵

It is through these accounts (the Gospels) alone that we are able to come into contact with him.³⁶

Seemingly with tongue-in-cheek Kähler writes:

How important, therefore, the least little feature becomes! How indispensable the removal of every optical illusion created by the prism of tradition, the removal of every obscurity in the interpretation of his first witnesses! How inexpressibly important the reality of Jesus, down to the minutest detail.³⁸

The point being that if there are real obscurities in the tradition which could be removed by historiography what would this imply about the Christians in the early period.

Kähler reflects:

If their contemplation of and worship of the Jesus of the Gospels were distorted and deflected by those obscurities which the critic professes to find in their writings then indeed they would not have

³³Ibid., p. 55.

³⁴Ibid., p. 76.

³⁵Ibid., p. 78.

³⁶Ibid., p. 92.

³⁷Ibid., p. 82.

³⁸Ibid., p. 61.

known their Savior . . . the same would be true of all subsequent Christians, including ourselves."³⁹

In light of the fact that, for Kähler, the early Christians obviously did know their Savior the search for the historical Jesus was superfluous.

One comes to recognize, however, that it is precisely this historical research that is necessary for an accurate understanding of the Christ. Kähler at this point is both confused and confusing. First, the Gospel writers did not, in effect, worship and contemplate the "Jesus of the Gospels." This "Jesus of the Gospels" was the outcome of their contemplation of the Jesus of history. Secondly, it is at this point that the possibility of so-called "obscurities in the tradition" could arise. In other words, the Savior that the Gospel authors knew was indeed their Savior--whose else could it have been? The question is whether their "Savior" was indeed the Savior. Was their interpretation of Jesus accurate to who and what Jesus was in himself? It certainly follows that if the Gospel writers were inadvertently deflected from the Christ by obscurities in the tradition then our faith, as faith in their faith, is also deflected or obscured.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰There would seem to be some deflection in the understanding of Jesus in the four Gospels as evidenced in the different "Christologies."

Kähler does not recognize this point, but rather in fact proclaims that despite the formation of the Gospels

from these fragmentary traditions, these half-understood recollections, these portrayals colored by the writer's individual personalities, these heart-felt confessions, these sermons proclaiming him as Savior, there gazes upon us a vivid and coherent image of a Man, an image we never fail to recognize. Hence, we may conclude that in his unique and powerful personality and by his incompassable deeds and life (including his resurrection appearances) this Man has engraved his image on the mind and memory of his followers with such sharp and deeply etched features that it could be neither obliterated nor distorted.⁴¹

This deeply etched image of Jesus, namely, the biblical picture of the historic Christ was, for Kähler, the "invulnerable area" of faith.

Kähler contends that if people are to come to faith "There must be for everyone a reliable means of access to the Christ of the whole Bible" ⁴² Historical criticism cannot provide this means because only a select group of people can function within its bounds and evaluate its work. Therefore, "there must be another way to reach the historic Christ than that of scientific reconstruction."⁴³

⁴¹Kähler, pp. 89-90, cf., pp. 88, 95.

⁴²Ibid., p. 122.

⁴³Ibid., p. 63.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Having demonstrated the inadequacy of the Gospels as a means to reconstruct the historical Jesus, which had been considered a way to faith, Kähler moved to his second task--"to establish the validity of an alternative approach"⁴⁴ to Jesus. This alternative approach was to seek the historic Christ of the Bible.

The German title of Kähler's book is a key to his position. It reads: Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche biblische Christus. The distinction between the two German words for history, *historisch* and *geschichtlich*, is the key. These two words are translated as "historical" and "historic" respectively. The distinction is to be understood as that between a "historical" fact which may be completely insignificant to anyone or a mere disconnected occurrence, and a "historic" event which has great significance not only for the present, but also for the future and is remembered by posterity as of determinate character.

Not a Historische Jesus But the
Geschichtliche Christ

Kähler is convinced that the Gospels cannot and need not yield a *historische* Jesus, i.e., a reconstruction

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 45.

by the biographers from the Gospels. Rather, what is important for faith is the *geschichtliche* Christ portrayed in the biblical picture of Jesus. He writes:

What is a truly "historic figure" that is, a person who has been influential in molding posterity, as measured by his contribution to history? Is it not the person who originates and bequeaths a permanent influence? He is one of those dynamic individuals who intervene in the course of events. What they are in themselves produces effects, and through these effects their influence persists Thus, from a purely historical point of view the truly historic element in any great figure is the discernible personal influence which he exercises upon later generations.⁴⁵

In Kähler's thought, the decisive influence that Jesus had upon posterity consists "in nothing else but the faith of his disciples, their conviction that in Jesus they had found the conqueror of guilt, sin, temptation and death."⁴⁶ Jesus' influence, thus, resulted in the affirmation "Christ is Lord." Additionally according to Kähler "to designate this Lord as 'Christ' [Messiah] . . . is to confess his unique, supra-historical significance for the whole of humanity."⁴⁷ In other words "His work is his person in its historic-suprahistoric effect."⁴⁸ Therefore, the impact or influence of Jesus elicited faith from the

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 95.

disciples and resulted in a confession of faith, to wit, the Gospels. These Gospels then are the means by which one comes into contact with the historic Christ. As Kähler expressed it: "The Bible proclaims Christ, proclaims him from and in faith, and we in turn come to faith through its faith."⁴⁹ Thus "the picture of Christ which has such an effect is that which bears within itself a dogma, a confession of faith"⁵⁰ From this perspective the meaning of Kähler's statement that "to commune with Jesus one needs nothing more than the biblical presentation"⁵¹ is clear. It follows for Kähler that "In reality, therefore, we are not able to separate Christ and the Bible."⁵² However with regard to the origin of faith in Christ Kähler wants "to make clear that ultimately we believe in Christ, not on account of any authority [e.g., the Bible] but because he himself invokes such faith from us . . . Christ himself is the originator of the biblical picture of the Christ"⁵³

The historical Jesus as a basis of faith is, therefore, for Kähler, completely irrelevant, or as he put it,

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 76.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 77.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 78.

⁵²Ibid., p. 86, cf., 75.

⁵³Ibid., p. 87.

"a blind alley."⁵⁴ In this same vein "historical facts which first have to be established by science cannot as such become experiences of faith."⁵⁵ Therefore, he says, "I am not really worried about the historicity of the events of salvation"⁵⁶ This rather bold statement should not be taken to mean that it makes no difference whether the events of salvation are historical, i.e., actually took place or not. But, rather that "our faith in the Savior is awakened and sustained by the brief and concise apostolic proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord."⁵⁷ Thus, "The risen Lord is not the historical Jesus behind the Gospel, but the Christ of the apostolic preaching"⁵⁸ This is, for Kähler, "the end of the historical Jesus" and the establishment of "The real Christ, that is, the Christ who has exercised an influence in history . . . this real Christ is the Christ who is preached."⁵⁹

⁵⁴Cf., Ernst Käsemann, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in his New Testament Questions of Today (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 23-65.

⁵⁵Kähler, p. 74.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 96. According to Kähler this is the purpose of the Gospels: "The purpose is to awaken faith in Jesus through a clear proclamation of his saving activity." (Ibid., p. 127.)

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 66.

The Distinction Between *Fides Quae*
and *Fides Qua*

Kähler suggests "we must distinguish between that which is offered to faith and that which motivates faith to grasp what has been offered."⁶⁰ It is clear that what is "offered to faith" is to be understood as the content of faith, the picture of the historic Biblical Christ.⁶¹ The concern is that "there must be for everyone a reliable means of access to the Christ"⁶² This access is what he has termed the biblical picture of Christ.⁶³ It is the distinction between this picture of Jesus and that which motivates faith to grasp this picture that he wants to make. In other words the distinction is between the content of faith (*fides quae*) and the act of faith (*fides qua*).

In speaking of "that which motivates faith" Kähler was less clear than when speaking of faith's content. He stated: "this motivating factor ultimately lies in his [the persons] experience of surrendering himself to his Savior."⁶⁴ Rather than clarifying the point this statement

⁶¹Cf., Ibid., p. 92. .

⁶²Ibid., p. 122.

⁶³Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 76.

only pushes the understanding to a step that must follow. Kähler does not clarify the motivating factor for the person to surrender himself to his Savior? He readily admits that

In making a decision when confronted by this picture [i.e., the biblical picture of Christ] . . . two impelling forces interact. The one is receptivity, the need to see the deficiency and impotence of one's inner life transformed Without this there may be admiration and veneration but certainly not faith. . . . The other force is the impression which this marvelous picture makes upon the receptive beholder.⁶⁵

Yet, even here one is not told how it is that the person comes to see the need for the transformation of his inner life. He has not explained how the connection or condemnation is experienced by which the person is led to surrender to the Savior. A doctrine of the Holy Spirit as that connecting or convicting power of God may be implicit here and if so it needs to be made explicit and developed.

If it is through the biblical picture of Jesus that one comes to know Jesus, or in other words that God speaks through the Bible, then the question arises as to "whether or not what he said has been accurately transmitted to us" ⁶⁶ That is to say "the person for whom the historic Christ is the object of a conscious inward relationship must be sure that he has this historic Christ vividly

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 105.

before him."⁶⁷ Kähler's response is that it is not the accuracy of the text that is the issue, for

there are few people today who, if they are moved to think at all about such a question as this, would look upon every Bible passage as a word of God . . . the question is whether it was said to you.⁶⁸

Historical criticism can therefore be applied to the text without fear of destroying faith. Faith is not based upon any particular passage of the Bible, but rather upon the biblical picture of the historic Christ. Kähler can now proclaim:

So long as we do not substitute for faith in Christ an assent of our conscience to Jesus' religious ethic, so long as a living Christianity depends on the person of the historic Christ, and so long as the Spirit of Christ identifies himself as such by taking what belongs to the historic Jesus Christ (John 16.14), there will always remain the necessity that we encounter precisely this historic Christ, not as an ideal to be realized in the remote future by scientific investigation nor as the fluctuating result of the biographers' disputations, but, rather, within a tradition which possesses the inherent power to convince us of its divine authenticity.⁶⁹

The question of the accuracy of the text, or the accuracy of its transmission, is subordinated by its "inherent power to convince us of its divine authenticity."⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 121.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 105-106.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 121-122.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 122.

SUMMARY

The answers to Kähler's questions as set out in the beginning of this chapter are now before us. To the question: How does Christianity become certain of its historic Christ? Kähler's answer is the biblical picture of the historic Christ. This picture serves as the invulnerable area of faith. For Kähler, this picture could not have been produced if it were not for the fact of Jesus and his dynamic influence. It is with all confidence that he said, "Christ himself is the originator of the biblical picture of the Christ." The Christian can thereby be assured of the basis of faith--the historic Christ.

Kähler's response to his question: Do Christians value the Bible because it contains historical documents? is clearly in the negative. The Bible does not contain documents that would serve as biographical material. Rather, this material is kerygmatic in intention. This means that the importance or value of the texts is not their historical trustworthiness, but rather their *pro me*. That is to say, their address or confrontation of the listener. The value, therefore, of the Bible for Christians is not its historical verifiability, but its address to me in my particular situation.

The emphasis of Kähler on the kerygmatic intention of the Bible, understood in the sense of "the real Christ

is the preached Christ," is developed by Bultmann into a full-blown Kerygmatic Theology. In this theology the historical element is pushed aside in favor of the encounter with the proclamation. He thereby develops an understanding of the nature of faith and the resultant life of faith based on this insight of Kähler's--which he takes beyond the intention of Kähler.

A Fundamentalist view, or what might also be called a Biblicist view, is another alternative emerging from Kähler's position. For a proponent of such a position the Bible itself, as the witness to the historic Christ, is central and faith is understood in relation to the propositional truths of the Bible. Here again a particular mode of Christian life is developed from this understanding of the nature of faith.

There is considerable similarity between the positions of Bultmann and the Biblicists. However, there are also unmistakable differences and no Fundamentalist would want to be directly associated with what they might call the radical position of Bultmann. Nevertheless, because of this similarity an exposition of Bultmann's position will illustrate the non-propositional view of faith, mentioned above, and by way of contrast, the propositional view of the Fundamentalist. This contrast will be addressed in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter III

BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NATURE OF FAITH

This chapter is concerned with an exposition of two opposing approaches to the nature of faith. These conceptualizations are two possible developments from Martin Kähler's position discussed in the last chapter. The non-propositional view, reflected in Rudolf Bultmann, will be presented first, and then by contrast the propositional view of the Biblicist will be treated.

SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR

The man who wishes to believe in God as his God must realize that he has nothing in his hand on which to base his faith. He is suspended in mid-air and cannot demand proof of the Word which addresses him. For the ground and object of faith are identical.¹

Bultmann's concern is to make clear that faith does not permit itself any extrinsic basis in objective facts. Faith, "is no disposition of the human soul, not being convinced, but rather the answer to an address."² Rather

¹Rudolf Bultmann, "Bultmann's Reply to His Critics," in Hans Werner Bartsch (ed.), Kerygma and Myth (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), I, 206.

²Rudolf Bultmann, "The Concept of Revelation in the

faith is an address to a particular person at a particular time, or particular possibilities for existence.³ So

Bultmann writes,

possibilities of my own life are disclosed to me which I can understand only in so far as I am open to my possibilities and will to let myself be open The understanding comes about only in affirming or denying Understanding, therefore, is always simultaneously resolve, decision.⁴

Faith as Response to the Proclamation

Bultmann's explicit discussion of the structure of faith, in his Theology of the New Testament, says at the outset: "The attitude of man in which he receives the gift of 'God's righteousness' and in which the divine deed of salvation accomplishes itself with him in faith. Thus 'faith' is the condition for the receipt of 'righteousness' . . . (and) such 'faith' is the acceptance of the Christian message."⁵

New Testament," in his Existence and Faith (New York: Meridian, 1960), p. 87.

³Cf., Bultmann, "Bultmann's Reply . . . ,", I, 206.

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of 'Dialectical Theology' for the Scientific Study of the New Testament," in his Faith and Understanding (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), I, 158.

⁵Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 314.

The fact of God's redemptive act in Jesus cannot be demonstrated by historical science, according to Bultmann. Therefore, faith must be the acceptance of the Christian proclamation where God is present to man. Bultmann maintains that "God is present to man specifically in the word and only in the word."⁶ So "Faith is response to the Word; the new self-understanding is the response to the proclamation."⁷

Inasmuch as God's act in Christ is established through the Word and the Word only, faith must "abandon

⁶Rudolf Bultmann, "The Concept of the Word of God in the New Testament," in his Faith and Understanding, I, 297.

⁷Rudolf Bultmann, "The Christology of the New Testament," in his Faith and Understanding, I, 278. Bultmann's use of the term "self-understanding" is not to be confused with self-consciousness. "Self-understanding" is a technical term in Bultmann's theology and means the self's understanding of its own existence in concrete historical and existential terms. Each person, according to Bultmann, has an existential self-understanding, an understanding of their own existence in the world, and this understanding develops and changes by reason of the "situation of encounter." "This personal self-understanding is called into question in every situation of encounter. As my life goes on, my self-understanding may prove inadequate or it may become clearer or deeper as the result of further experiences and encounters." An "encounter," therefore, is that event in which the self is confronted by the necessity for decision, the necessity for a decision which will affect one's self-understanding. "Entering into decisive encounters I may achieve a totally new self-understanding as a result of the love which is bestowed upon me when, for example, I marry or make a new friend." [John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 74f] It is the encounter with the proclamation of the kerygma that affects this new self-understanding in us.

absolutely the search for proof," either in external or internal form. Faith must seek no other basis for itself than that offered by the word.

It is therefore necessary to abandon absolutely the search for proof of the Word of proclamation, either external proof or proof within ourselves (in 'experiences'). We must really accept in earnest Romans 10:17: So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the Word of God. Faith is directed to the Word and the authorized proclamation of the Word. Therefore, no other validation can be demanded for the Word and no other basis created for it than the Word itself. When it comes to us, it asks us whether or not we will hear it.⁸

Faith is not abstract. It follows, for Bultmann, that one cannot have an abstract faith in general. This is what Ebeling refers to when he says: "when speaking of Christian faith we should say that some kind of participation is necessary, some kind of confession or commitment."⁹ Thus Bultmann emphasizes:

For faith does not mean to accept the proclamation of God's forgiving love and to be convinced of its truth in general, but rather to regulate one's life by it it means to let my concrete now be determined by the proclamation and faith in it. If the proclamation of God's forgiving love is really valid for me, i.e., for me in my concrete life situation, then it is not all understandable apart from that situation. And I am not to believe in general--also to believe alongside of or behind my other relationship--but rather am to believe

⁸Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," in his Faith and Understanding, I, 138.

⁹Gerhard Ebeling, The Nature of Faith (Philadelphia: Fontana Library, 1967), p. 12.

here and now as one who has something to do (as to endure) and who is to do this then in faith--who is to venture what he does in faith and venture his faith in what he does.¹⁰

Only if a person's life is radically changed by his faith is that faith genuine, according to Bultmann. One can hear the proclamation and can decide to have nothing to do with it, or one could decide to accept it.

However, this faith would not be genuine if the everyday affairs in which I once again shortly find myself and for which the word is spoken do not appear in its light. If I do not allow my concrete present to be qualified by the word that is spoken to me, thus I have not really believed it for all of my hearing. Only when I now actually understand myself and my situation in terms of the word, only when I now see or venture to see my neighbor in the other person who encounters me, only then have I believed and do I believe now.¹¹

Bultmann is insisting that the only time one "has" faith is "when I have it ever anew in my duties and exigencies."¹² Faith, therefore, "determines one's living in its manifold historical reality, and there is no moment in which the man of faith is released from the obedience of constantly living out of the 'grace' of God."¹³

Faith as considered act of obedience. Faith, for Bultmann, is indeed an act of obedience. "Faith . . . is

¹⁰Rudolf Bultmann, "What Does it Mean to Speak of God?," in his Faith and Understanding, I, 56.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., I, 57.

¹³Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 324.

the free deed of obedience in which the new self constitutes itself in place of the old."¹⁴ "It is evident that 'faith' has the character of obedience and is an act of decision."¹⁵ "Hence its (the kerygma) acceptance--faith--is obedience, acknowledgement, confession."¹⁶ "'Faith' is the acceptance of the Kerygma not a mere cognizance of it and agreement with it but as the genuine obedience to it which includes a new understanding of one's self."¹⁷ This conception of faith as obedience is made clear by Bultmann in the following statement:

For Paul the acceptance of the message in faith takes the form of an act of obedience because of the fact that the message which demands acknowledgement of the crucified Jesus as Lord demands of man the surrender of his previous understanding of himself, the reversal of the direction his will has previously had.¹⁸

Bultmann not only refers to faith as obedience but also as an act of decision.¹⁹ Indeed, he explicitly says " . . . faith is a free act and decision."²⁰ Obedience and "free act" are intertwined. For "it is only in a free act

¹⁴Ibid., I, 316.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 317.

¹⁶Ibid., I, 319.

¹⁷Ibid., I, 324.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 315.

¹⁹Ibid., I, 317.

²⁰Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," I, 132.

that we are ourselves and are completely whole. Such a free act is obedience."²¹ The point here is clearly that the act of faith is man's act. Some mysterious Spirit operating behind man's resolve is ruled out. Man makes and must make his own decision and stand responsible for it.²²

This act of the will as the decision of faith, however, is not to be conceived as a strictly voluntary understanding. Rather the act of faith must be guarded against this misunderstanding of it as a work.²³ Quoting Wilhelm Herrmann's Gesammelte Aufsätze Bultmann notes:

'If faith is pure trust, then it is for us a free surrender which is the exact opposite of a voluntary undertaking (the latter would be a "work"). Accordingly it is, in its depths, our own work.' (I [Bultmann] should prefer for the sake of clear terminology to say 'out'). But then equally it is experienced as the work of one stronger than us, who inwardly compels us²⁴

Bultmann's emphasis was that faith is man's act, but is not of the nature of a voluntary act or a will to believe, so much as it is an act "engendered by that which then forms its content."²⁵

²¹Bultmann, "What Does it Mean to Speak of God?," I, 61. Cf., Bultmann, "On The Question of Christology," I, 121, 132, 133.

²²Cf., Ebeling, Ch. 1.

²³Cf., Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 35f.

²⁴Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," I, 133.

²⁵Wilhelm Herrmann, Gesammelte Aufsätze, p. 268,

Following Herrmann, Bultmann described the act of faith as "the experience of trust which is at once act and effect."²⁶ According to Herrmann, "Our trust lives always through the power of that which created trust in us."²⁷ In articulating this experience of trust Herrmann notes that it exists

when a personal life touches us to which we can cleave in trust and reverence. Such experiences become for us revelations of him by whom alone we can know ourselves to be absolutely governed in free surrender. In them is revealed to us each time in a special way something of the only Being whom we can rightly call God. But certainly we find our God in this spiritual power only when we will put ourselves in the relation of trust to that power as we have experienced it. If we clearly see how it brought us to full surrender and thereby created life in us, then we should be dishonest and untrue if we were not ready to obey it alone and to seek the conquest of our difficulties through it alone.²⁸

Faith as confession. Faith "is simultaneously 'confession.'" 'Faith' is 'faith in'"²⁹ Bultmann wishes to guard against a misconception of faith as a human attitude, and thus stresses that "it always has reference

quoted by Bultmann, Ibid.

²⁶Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," I, 133.

²⁷Wilhelm Herrmann, Die mit der Theologie verknüpfte Not der evangelischen Kirche und ihre Überwindung (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), p. 24.

²⁸Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology." I, 134.

²⁹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 134.

to its object."³⁰

For the 'faith by which one believes' is what it is only in relation to its object, the 'faith which is believed' Faith which is conceived as a human attitude, as a spiritual function, or a pious frame of mind, as a sense of the numinous, and the life, is not faith at all. Faith exists only as faith in, that is as faith in its object, in God known in revelation.³¹

Consequently, Christian faith is by its very nature "faith in" (faith in faith), for the believer knows that "at the very point where man can do nothing, God steps in and acts indeed he has acted already--on man's behalf."³² He knows of an act of God which first makes surrender faith, love, the authentic life of man possible. This act is the love of God in Christ. "Faith in" is faith in the love of God revealed in Christ. Thus, "For everyone who believes, his past life is dead and done with. He is a new creature, and as such faces each new moment. In short, he has become a free man."³³

The knowing that is contained in faith, as exemplified in the passage "since we know that death no longer has power over the risen Christ, we believe that if we have died with him we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:8f),

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," I, 119-120.

³²Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Bartsch, I, 31.

³³Ibid., I, 32.

can be understood as arising out of faith itself. "But since this knowledge can be appropriated only in obedient, comprehending faith, and hence contains an understanding of one's self, knowledge may also appear as arising out of faith."³⁴ Bultmann, therefore concludes that "Ultimately 'faith' and 'Knowledge' are identical as a new understanding of one's self."³⁵

Faith as New Self-Understanding

Bultmann draws an equation between faith and a "new self-understanding." The contrast between faith and unfaith is between an authentic self-understanding and an unauthentic self-understanding. Bultmann draws from Martin Heidegger's philosophical analysis of existence for articulation of these two modes of existence.³⁶ Heidegger describes the being of human *Dasein* as existence, the ability to be. In his being, man is concerned with himself. He loses himself, his authenticity, his ownness, when he falls victim to the "they," the world, and thus surrenders himself as possibility. On the other hand, if man exists authentically, he is never finished. He always stands

³⁴Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 318.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper & Row, 1927).

before himself; he constantly leaves what he already is behind himself, in order to "project" himself into the future, or to become himself anew over and over again. In accepting Heidegger's perspective Bultmann discusses these two possible modes of existence: authentic existence as the life of faith and unauthentic existence as human existence apart from faith.

Human existence apart from faith. The life apart from God is the life the New Testament describes as "life according to the flesh" (Romans 8:13, Gal. 6:8). But what does *κατὰ σὰρξ* mean? According to Bultmann it is "Not the bodily or physical side of human nature, but the sphere of visible, concrete, tangible, and measurable reality, which as such is also the sphere of corruption and death."³⁷ Life "according to the flesh" can manifest itself in a variety of fashions. It can be seen as the life evolved around sensual pleasure, or a life centered in the pride of achievement. These distinctions, however, are somewhat misleading and limited.

For 'flesh' embraces not only the material things of life, but all human creation and achievement pursued for the sake of some tangible reward It includes every passive quality, and every advantage a man can have, in the sphere of visible, tangible reality.³⁸

³⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," I, 18.

³⁸Ibid.

Anxiety is a primary element in the life of man. He relates this anxiety to some particular object. For Bultmann, man focuses his anxiety upon security, "and in proportions to his opportunities and his success in the visible sphere he places his 'confidence' in the 'flesh.'"³⁹

The attempt to find security in the tangible is in contradistinction to the real situation. The tangible and the visible are also contingent and transitory. They pass out of sight and out of existence. Thus man's efforts to find security by such means "is the way in which he loses his true life and becomes the slave of that very sphere where he had hoped to master, and which he hoped would give him security."⁴⁰ Man's "world," his attempt at security apart from God, becomes a "world in revolt against God." Man has become a slave of "this world" and it dominates his life. Bultmann suggests that:

An illustration of this may be seen in the way one attempts to secure visible security for ourselves brings us into collision with others: we can seek security for ourselves only at this expense. Thus on one hand we get envy, anger, jealousy, and the like, and on the other compromise, bargainings, and adjustments of conflicting interests. This creates an all-pervasive atmosphere which controls all our judgments Thus man becomes the slave of anxiety (Rom. 8:15).⁴¹

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., I, 19.

Existence in faith. "The authentic life, on the other hand," for Bultmann, "would be a life based on unseen, intangible realities. Such a life means the abandonment of all self-contrived security."⁴²

The central element in the life of faith is faith in the grace of God. "It means faith that the unseen, intangible reality actually confronts us as love, opening up our future and signifying not death but life."⁴³ This is what Bultmann calls the forgiveness of sin, deliverance from the bondage of the past.⁴⁴ In the pursuit for visible security, Bultmann maintains "we shut out invisible reality from our lives and refuse God's future which comes to us as a gift."⁴⁵ Yet, when man opens his heart to God's grace his sins are forgiven and we open ourselves freely to the future. Thus "possibilities of my own self are disclosed to me which I can understand only in so far as I am open to my possibilities and will to let myself be open."⁴⁶ Herein lies the meaning of faith in Bultmann's view. As he puts it:

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Cf., Ibid., I, 32.

⁴⁵Ibid., I, 19.

⁴⁶Bultmann, "The Significance of 'Dialectical Theology' . . . ," I, 158.

This is what is meant by faith: to open ourselves freely to the future. But at the same time faith involves obedience, for it means turning our backs on self and abandoning all security. It means giving up every attempt to carve out a niche in life for ourselves, surrendering all our self-confidence, and resolving to trust in God alone It means radical self-commitment to God in the expectation that everything will come from him and nothing from ourselves. Such a life spells deliverance from all worldly, tangible objects, leading to complete detachment from the world and thus to freedom.⁴⁷

In Bultmann's understanding the separation from the world is not one that leads to asceticism, but rather "means preserving a distance from the world and dealing with it in a spirit of 'as if not.'"⁴⁸ Therefore,

Existence in faith, then is a movement between "no longer" and "not yet." "No longer": The decision of faith has done away with the past; nevertheless as true decision, the decision must be maintained--that is, made again and again anew. As that which is overcome, the past is always with us, and faith must remember the past as that which is past, i.e., surrendering a possession which had given a supposed security, precludes taking a new possession in exchange for it. Viewed from man's side no one can say, "I have made it my own"; and yet in view of the fact that "Jesus Christ has made me his own," it can be said, "Nevertheless the hoped-for has already occurred."⁴⁹

The believer has life here and now. Outwardly everything remains as before, but inwardly the believer's relation to the world has been radically changed.

⁴⁷Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," I, 19-20.

⁴⁸Ibid., I, 20.

⁴⁹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 322. Cf., Bultmann, "What Does it Mean to Speak of God," I, 64-65.

Bultmann gives crisp expression to his understanding of faith in the following quotations:

It is not that some special, demonstrable change happens in our lives, that we are imbued with special qualities and can do special things as speak special words which are of a non-human kind. What could we ever do or say that would not be human!⁵⁰

It follows then, for Bultmann, that

To have faith in Christ, therefore, does not mean to hold particular opinions about his nature Nor does it mean an imitative following of him, in the sense of allowing one's self to be drawn into his faith in God and his way of life Faith is certainly following Christ--but by accepting his cross, not at all in the sense of imitation but as grasping the forgiveness and the possibility of life created by the cross Faith in Christ is complete submission under that which God has done in Christ.⁵¹

Bultmann concludes, "Hence there are no special practices designated for the man of Faith--'for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail (and that also means no specifically religious practices), but faith working through love' (Gal. 5.6)."⁵²

Summary

The nature of faith, from Bultmann's perspective, then is such that it is a resolve of the will in response

⁵⁰Bultmann, "What Does it Mean to Speak of God," I, 64.

⁵¹Bultmann, "The Christology of the New Testament," I, 276-277.

⁵²Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 324.

to an address--the proclamation of the Word of God. This response is a considered act of obedience leading to a confession of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The obedient act of response to the proclamation is thereby a manifestation of a new self-understanding. Thereafter one responds to life from love and no longer out of a frantic pursuit for security.

The Christian life in faith, it follows, is that life lived as a free act of response to the human situation in light of this new self-understanding. As free act the Christian life is not bound or limited by appeal to particular rules or doctrines. Faith is not an appeal to an act or attitude, but rather to a mode of existence, viz., life lived in responsive love.

By way of contrast we turn now to the Biblicist understanding of the nature of faith and the Christian life.

RETURN TO THE DEFINITE AND THE CONCRETE

The Biblicist is ultimately concerned with the decisive question: What shall I do to be saved? Great concern is given to the means each one employs to receive his salvation. This is where one is free to act. Willing acceptance, therefore, is a primary aspect on the part of one for his salvation. It is the necessary response of man to God's gracious gift.

Individually, people are presented with an absolute; either/or. On the one hand, there is heaven, the final fulfillment of all right desire. On the other, there is hell, an everlasting existence of punishment. It is the individual who either accepts or rejects God's gift ultimately by his own personal decisions.

This decision, the absolute freedom of the moment of choice, is of ultimate significance. Life, for the Biblicist, is indeed decision; decision for or against God. In the solitary confines of one's own personal decision life is determined.

The Path of Salvation

Owing to the fact that achieving salvation is the paramount concern of the Biblicist, the question arises as to where one should seek for salvation. Can one find salvation in the intellectual quest and queries of the philosophies? Is salvation to be found in the material abode, of this world? Certainly not, is the Biblicist's answer. Salvation, can only be found in, and be the gift of, that One who is both creator and lover of mankind--God. Only God can know the plan of salvation. Only God can give salvation. Thus the way to salvation is known only by means of instruction from God. Without God, man flounders in the darkness of ignorance. It is God alone who saves.

God must not only provide the way, He must also tell the way, clearly and unmistakably.

God, according to the Biblicist, has indeed told the way. The Bible is God's word--the proclamation of the way to salvation.

To believe, is the supreme condition of salvation. We must believe that God's Word is true and above all that Christ is our Lord and Savior. To believe in the Bible, as God's Word is to have faith and to have found the way to salvation.

Belief, for the Biblicist, is understood as the assent of the mind to the truths proclaimed by God. The Bible, as the record of those truths, therefore, plays a central role in the way to salvation. In believing God's Word, one finds himself convicted for the way we have lived. One becomes ashamed of his action and wish to be changed--to be made new. There is no real belief without a contrite turning away from sin and a deep desire to be remade. Thus repentance is inextricable from belief.

Salvation is not the necessary result of belief and repentance. Rather, salvation to the Biblicist is the free gift of God by which He crowns any obedient act according to His promises. By God's grace the old life of sin has died and the new life has been born. The old will, which asserted itself against God, is replaced by a new

will which desires to live righteously. Obedience has replaced the spirit of rebelliousness.

Having met the conditions set by God--belief and obedience--we are saved. Neither doubt nor anxiety are any longer present in our life. Rather, the consequence of our faith and regeneration is a life of righteousness. This new life in Christ is not one of moral indifference. If we are morally indifferent, it is clear that we have not been born again. Those born again desire to live in grateful obedience to God.

The Life of Faith

The Christian life, from the Biblicist's perspective, is a continual struggle to obey the will of God proclaimed in the Scripture. God's will may not always be as self-evident and clear as we would like. Yet, once we do see it definitely, we must act upon it without doubt, regardless of personal cost. The Christian will not refuse to obey a clear call to obedient action.

Outward obedience to the will of God should be coupled with the motive of unselfish love. These are God's demands for righteous conduct. There is, however, an important distinction between obedience and motive. No one has absolute control over their motives. An act of will cannot wholly replace selfish desires with the love of God. Nevertheless, we can act in conformity with the will of

God. For the Biblicist, to depreciate some action because the motive is not pure, or to suggest that we must first desire to do the good in order that the doing be truly virtuous, is dangerous and destructive to Christian virtue.

Feelings are very elusive and changing. Purity of motives is a difficult thing to insure. It is reasonable therefore, that God does not demand the inward purity which is difficult, if not impossible to offer, but rather the outward obedience which one can offer to Him. Biblicists thus emphasize acting rightly however one might feel. Obedience is the primary factor; accompanying motives are secondary.

The Bible and Faith

In the Biblicist's position the Christian life is one of free acceptance of the truths of God's Word and free obedience to its teaching. The Bible is central and indeed the only source of reliable knowledge of God. God speaks to us in and only in the Bible alone. The Bible, thus, stands categorically distinct from the word of man. The Bible is God's word of truth. Man's unaided words are error.

The Bible serves not only as the source of the knowledge of God's promises, but also of His demands. The Bible in revealing God's will serves as the sole norm for the Christian. Its teachings become the authority by which

we live. As Christians our task is to "trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey," as the Evangelical hymn has put it.

Summary

The Biblicist, therefore, understands the Christian life primarily as one of belief and obedience. One's mind assents to the truths (propositions) of Scripture, and one's actions must conform to its teaching. When one believes and obeys one can safely trust God for his salvation.

This exposition represents in outline the two alternative positions in regard to the nature of faith and the Christian life. They stand ever against each other in presenting differing conceptualizations. The next chapter of this paper offers an analysis of these contrasting positions.

Chapter IV

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ALTERNATE APPROACHES TO THE NATURE OF FAITH

In the preceding chapter two basic approaches to the nature of faith have been discussed. On the one hand was the propositional view. In this view the nature of faith is understood as the assent to the truth of propositions revealed in the Bible. On the other hand, is the non-propositional view where faith is an existential act of decision in new self-understanding.

The ultimate distinction between these approaches is that the Biblicist position is replete with content to believe, while for Bultmann, faith is for all practical intention devoid of content. In the Biblicist view, the Christian life is the determinate outcome of faith. The propositional content of faith, became the norm for the Christian life in the sense of prescribing particular actions. In the non-propositional view the Christian life is not given specific directions or particular patterns of behavior for its regulation. Rather, the Christian life is development from moment to moment under the guidance of a new self-understanding manifested in love.

This chapter is concerned with the pros and cons of these two alternate views. Is one more accurate, more adequate than the other? Which, if either, does justice to the intention of the Christian message? These questions will serve as guidelines for the analysis that follows.

ESCHATOLOGY NOT HISTORY: A NON-PROPOSITIONAL VIEW

Moving from Kähler's basic insight that the real Christ is the preached Christ, Bultmann maintains that:

The crucified and resurrected Christ encounters us in the Word of preaching, and never in any other way. It would surely be a mistake if one here wanted to inquire back into the historical origin of the preaching, as if this could demonstrate its rightness. That would mean to want to establish faith in the Word of God by historical inquiry. The Word of preaching encounters us here as the Word of God over against which we cannot put the question of legitimation, but it asks us whether or not we will believe it.¹

Faith then, for Bultmann, must rely only on the kerygma, and never be allowed to divert its attention to historical facts or theological doctrines.

The basic distinction between Bultmann and the Biblicist lies in Bultmann's understanding of the relation of faith and the kerygma. It would seem on the surface that they would both agree that faith is based explicitly on the kerygma or the word of God. However, for Bultmann

¹Rudolf Bultmann, "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament," in his Existence and Faith (New York: Meridian, 1960), p. 87.

belief in the kerygma was concerned with primitive Christianity's interpretation of human existence, not with belief in the content of the kerygma itself, for example, the virgin birth, the miracle stories, or the ascension. The historical basis of the kerygma for Bultmann remains an open question. At this point Bultmann separates himself from his teacher, Martin Kähler. As Pannenberg has written:

For Bultmann, not history but eschatology is the origin of the New Testament Kerygma. What has to be accomplished is the uncovering of the eschatological understanding of existence. For this purpose what matters is not the "what" but the "that" of the shock that gave rise to the primitive Christian Easter-faith and thereby to the Kerygma of the earliest congregation.²

Jesus and the Kerygma

Nevertheless Bultmann insists that Jesus of Nazareth is essential to the Kerygma:

The content of the message (kerygma) is thus an event, a historical fact, the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, but at the same time his work, his death, and his resurrection Christian preaching is the communication of a historical fact, so that its communication is something more than mere communication.³

²Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Kerygma and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), I, 87.

³Rudolf Bultmann, "Preaching: Genuine and Secularized," in W. Leibrecht (ed.), Religion and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 240.

Here Bultmann appears not to divorce Jesus from the kerygma, nor to regard him as a mere presupposition of primitive Christian theology. Rather, Jesus is the content of the kerygma.

But in what sense is Jesus the content of the kerygma? According to Bultmann not in the sense of a bygone religious personality, a hero of faith, or model of morality. He is the kerygma's content as an eschatological occurrence, as God's saving act of grace for all mankind. The kerygma proclaims the eschatological event. This raises a problem. If the eschatological event is at the same time an historical fact, what then is the meaning of Bultmann's decree that faith is disinterested in what lies behind the kerygma, that one cannot and must not penetrate beneath the kerygma to the historical Jesus? To the extent that Bultmann acknowledges Jesus as the indispensable content of the kerygma, he must also refer faith to something other than mere kerygma. He says: "I do not deny that the resurrection kerygma is firmly rooted to the earthly figure of the crucified Jesus."⁴ This means that kerygma is more than an address, more than a call to repentance and faith, to authentic existence. It hinges upon a historical fact, the sheer facticity of Jesus and

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "A Reply to the Theses of J. Schniewind," in Hans Werner Bartsch (ed.), Kerygma and Myth (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), I, 112.

his cross. But further than this, Bultmann apparently will not go.⁵

The kerygma without historical content. This brings us to the question: Why has the kerygma so little historical content in Bultmann's way of thinking? Bultmann realizes that if all the historical content is eliminated, the kerygma loses its attachment to Jesus and looms into a celestial myth. On the other hand, if much of the historical content is retained, then it appears that the kerygma becomes vulnerable to historical research, and faith, contrary to its nature as existential act of decision, is bound up with assent to historical facts. To insure faith's independence of historical research, the cost is the dismissal of all historical elements in the kerygma. Bultmann, however, makes a single exception: the bare fact of Jesus' historicity and his death on the cross, the *dass* as the Germans put it--the fact "that" Jesus existed.

It must be asked by what sort of logic Bultmann can make any exception to his rule that faith dare not rest upon historical facts, lest it be exposed to the uncertainties of historical research, and that it would be contrary to the kerygma to inquire back into its origin in

⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (eds.), The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 25.

historical fact? Having singled out the historicity of Jesus and his cross as essential to the kerygma, Bultmann has already compromised his rule. Here lurks the glaring inconsistency in Bultmann's theology. Here is Bultmann's proposal: (1) the kerygma includes Jesus as its essential content; (2) faith is said to rest solely on the kerygma; (3) faith is entirely independent of historical inquiry. Therefore, particular historical facets of Jesus' life must be irrelevant to faith, as is everything subject to historical inquiry. But if this rule is extended it must result in the elimination of Jesus altogether from the kerygma. For Jesus himself, and not merely details about his life, is open to historical investigation.

How, then, does faith become assured of the historical nucleus of the kerygma? In Bultmann's thinking neither the kerygma nor faith can vouch for the historical content in the Gospel records about Jesus. Historical facts can be ascertained and established solely by the methods of historical research. This must hold true also for the historical fact of Jesus' existence. Thus, for Bultmann the historicity of Jesus and his cross is finally left to its fate in the hands of historical inquiry. Bultmann thereby makes faith dependent on historical research.

The separation of faith and history. There seem to be two chief causes of Bultmann's difficulty in stating the

positive relationship between Jesus and the kerygma.⁶

First, his concept of the kerygma is determined by the idea of existential self-understanding which has no structural relation to history as a course of events. His commitment to existentialism, via Martin Heidegger, allows him to talk about the historicity of existence, about the understanding of existence in the kerygma, and of faith in the kerygma as being open to the future, but it prevents him from acknowledging the ontological priority of historical reality, the kerygma's radical interest in what really happened in the Jesus of history, and the nature of faith to look to past fulfillment as well as future possibility. Secondly, he operates with a positivistic view of historical facts.⁷ Bultmann thus proceeds to extricate the kerygma and faith from the sphere in which the positivistic view of historical reality and knowledge operates. For this reason, faith can have no positive relation to historical research.

Existentialism as the reverse side of positivism accepts the verdict of positivism that history is meaningless, and moves into the inwardness of the self as the alternate locus of meaning. The kerygma as the vehicle of

⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁷The positivist is suspicious of all speculation not controlled by facts and sense experience. They argue that all true knowledge consist either of matters of fact or logic and mathematics. History is conceived of as the recovery of objective data such as names, dates and places.

self-understanding is elevated, and the history of Jesus on which it depends is reduced to the single point, of the facticity (the *dass*) of Jesus which is retained in order to keep a minimal connection between Jesus and the kerygma.

The Necessity of Material Continuity

The dangers and pitfalls of this view have been pointed out by Bultmann's own pupils. A common concern of these post-Bultmannians is to reassert the constitutive significance of Jesus for Christian faith. Ernst Käsemann, one of Bultmann's leading students, reacts strongly against Bultmann's proposal that the message of Jesus is reduced to a presupposition of the theology of the New Testament, not a part of that theology. Käsemann replies that "Christian faith is here being understood as faith in the exalted Lord, for which the Jesus of history as such is no longer considered of decisive importance."⁸ Käsemann himself would rather insist that the Christ of the Easter kerygma must be continuous with the Jesus of history; the meaning of preaching and faith depends on it. The Easter faith itself would dissolve into mythology without the identity of the earthly Jesus with the risen Christ.

⁸Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in his Essays on New Testament Themes (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 16.

While the post-Bultmannians continue to recognize the kerygma as the "cutting-edge" of the gospel, and while a "proved" Christ is still regarded as both historically impossible and theologically a contradiction, it is held that a quest back through the kerygma will reveal a Jesus behind it who is consistent with the church's proclamation. This "material continuity"--the relationship of the Jesus of history and the kerygma--serves as the source from which to derive the core of the kerygma, and on which to base its development, or to which any test of the kerygma's legitimacy must be referred.

Bultmann, by negating the historical aspect of the kerygma, has left faith, as based on the kerygma, open to the criticism of being founded on, or being a misinterpretation of, myth. If faith is to protect itself against this type of charge and hold to the truth, its historical aspects must be lifted up for all to see. We would agree with Pannenberg that "The Word alone with its sheer claim to truth, taken abstractly by itself, is not yet sufficient ground for faith."⁹

THE BIBLICIST AND THE POLES OF FAITH

The ultimate question that confronts the Biblicist is What must I do to be saved? The answer is to have faith,

⁹Pannenberg, "Kerygma and History," I, 85.

to be a person of faith. The problem that arises is what indeed does it mean to be a person of faith. Fritz Buri has suggested that the expression "of faith" can be taken in either of two different ways, grammatically.

Is the genitive construction, "of faith," a subjective or objective genitive? Both are possible grammatically, but materially there is a great difference between them. Understood as an objective genitive, the reality of faith means that toward which faith is directed, that which it believes, that which forms the object or content of faith. If the formulation is understood as a subjective genitive, then faith--quite apart from its content--is conceived in its inner nature, that is, as the enactment of a believing subject. The former stresses the objectivity of faith; the latter, its subjectivity.¹⁰

Buri is distinguishing between *fides quae*--the faith which is believed--and *fides qua*--the faith through which or in which belief occurs. The former deals with the objective content of faith, the latter deals with its subjective enactment.

Subjective and Objective Poles of Faith

This distinction draws one's attention to two sides or poles of faith. On the one hand is the subjective pole (*fides qua*) the fact that we believe--the act of trust. This could also be described as personal belief. On the other hand is the objective pole (*fides quae*) or that which

¹⁰Fritz Buri, How Can We Still Speak Responsibly of God? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 41.

is believed. This is what might be described as impersonal belief.

Personal beliefs may be contrasted with impersonal beliefs. Personal beliefs are then understood as those beliefs

. . . of which it is appropriate to ask whether a particular person's belief is authentic or inauthentic. If the belief is authentic, it is genuine, wholehearted integrated in the personality, consistently exemplified unconscious as well as conscious, etc. If it is inauthentic, it is not genuine, wholehearted, etc.¹¹

An "impersonal" belief, therefore, differs from a personal belief in that it is inappropriate to ask whether the belief is authentic or inauthentic. In other words it is inappropriate to ask of an impersonal belief existential or psychological questions as to whether someone "really" believes, without self-deception. An impersonal belief is sufficiently detached from the whole person for questions of self-deception not to arise. Personal beliefs have to do with profound inner states and extensive patterns of behavior which do involve the whole person.

Personal and impersonal belief. The distinction between "personal" and "impersonal" belief can also be understood in a special way in terms of "true" and "false." A personal belief can be "true" in the sense of "authentic"

¹¹Donald Evans, "Faith and Belief," Religious Studies, xii (March 1974), 6.

or "false" in the sense of "inauthentic," whereas an impersonal belief is only true or false with reference to what is believed. If faith is only or always understood from the perspective of the subjective pole, rather than from the objective pole, then it can always be either true or false in the sense of authentic or inauthentic (Bultmann). However, there also seems to be a realm of truth or falsity with regard to what is believed. Would it not be correct to say that one's belief that God, through Jesus, raised Lazarus from the dead is either true or false?

In the Biblicist position it would appear that the distinction between what the subjective (*fides qua*) and the objective (*fides quae*) poles of faith have not been given credence or taken account of as relevant. The "faith by which one believes" has thereby become a wholly formal and wholly human attitude. It is not related to the object of faith, God, but rather to doctrines about God. What fails to be seen is the impossibility of faith in a particular doctrine. Doctrines are what have been termed "impersonal" beliefs and can only be understood critically or submit to by a deliberate resolve. However, for the Biblicist, the act of faith is equated with the acceptance of particular content.

A confusion results, therefore, with regard to the nature of faith in the Biblicist position, when faith is

conceived as belief in the doctrine and teaching of the Bible. When one has difficulty in ascribing to some particular proposition of faith he either feels his "faith" is weak or he is accused of "lack of faith," or both. The underlying assumption of this conception of faith is that the true believer must and will accept by faith the propositions of faith revealed in the Bible.

This presupposition has disastrous consequences for faith. In this case faith runs the risk of becoming blind credulity toward the authority claim of the preached message or superstition owing to its seeming contradiction of better judgment, or even a tediously wrought work of faith, as the will-to-believe. This belief--confused with the "faith by which we believe"--is ultimately nothing but the resolve to hold as "true" "truths" which are not open to examination. This is self-deception, for one cannot consider as "true" something that is not open to examination and may stand contrary to verification. This seems to be the logical outcome of the confusion of the two poles of faith, the equating of the "faith by which we believe" with the "faith which is believed."

The place of scientific investigation. When the distinction between *fides qua* and *fides quae* is recognized it becomes self-evident, and a necessity, that the "faith which is believed" becomes a legitimate subject for

scientific investigation. There is however, a danger here, as Bultmann points out.

Such an investigation may, on the one hand, serve as a kind of rational "natural" theology and may furnish a basis for dogma; on the other hand, by means of logic, it may bring the ideas drawn from Scripture and dogma, accepted as formal authority, into a system in which the revelatory character of the relevant ideas is seen as guaranteed by their supernatural origin. It views the "faith which is believed" as something which is known and is elaborated by means of scientific inquiry. In that case, there remains for the "faith by which one believes" (*fides qua creditur*) only the role of accepting the conclusions of theology Thus faith itself becomes theology in so far as it makes a judgment and it becomes a matter of resolve in so far as it submits without judgment.¹²

This resolve would be self-deception. It is the implementation of faith as a compensation of subjective conviction to make up for defective knowledge. However, if that were the case every advance in knowledge would certainly help to make faith superfluous. On the other hand, faith's acceptance of the conclusions of an authority tends toward credulity.

Blind Credulity Toward Authority

In the Biblicist's understanding of the nature of faith, as the absolute commitment to revealed truth without appeal to scientific evidence, the *sine qua non* of faith is

¹²Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology," in his Faith and Understanding (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), I, 117.

the acceptance of certain indemonstrable propositions and thereby non-rational commitment to certain views, attitudes or propositions (credulity). The result of this position is that at some point or another one accepts certain beliefs without the possibility of their being grounded upon or refuted by argument. In the final analysis this acceptance is the resolve to believe despite the evidence (self-deception).

Lack of critical examination. The final outcome of such a position is that ultimately the bases of the life of faith are not subject to critical examination. In other words, there can be no arguments constructed which the person of faith will either allow to independently demonstrate the validity of those beliefs upon which the life of faith is based; or to constitute a refutation of those beliefs. These beliefs are simply accepted on the basis of the authority of the Bible. Thus these beliefs are in themselves both indefensible and irrefutable. They are either accepted or rejected--either we have faith or we do not--though no convincing reason can be given for anyone else either to accept or reject them. This is what was referred to above as faith become "blind credulity toward authority."

Distortions of faith. Because the Biblicist's understanding of the nature of faith is inexplicably

related to belief, that is to believing certain propositions to be true, it falls under two criticisms offered by Paul Tillich.¹³ These criticisms will illumine what has been said above. First, the "intellectualistic distortion of the meaning of faith" and second, the "voluntaristic distortion of the meaning of faith."

In what Tillich calls the intellectualistic distortion, he is concerned with the mistaken connection of faith and belief. He argues that a distortion of the meaning of faith is involved when faith is considered an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence, but is supported by a religious authority. This situation, for Tillich, is not faith, but rather a matter of belief. One believes that his information is correct. One may trust in that authority which makes a statement probable for him. But this is not faith. One does not have faith in the authority. It is more proper to call this "faith" belief, and more accurate to term this belief credulity.

The distinction between faith and knowledge, or faith and belief is made clear by Tillich when he writes:

The knowledge of our world . . . is a matter of inquiry by ourselves or by those in whom we trust. It is not a matter of faith. The dimension of faith is not the dimension of science, history or psychology Therefore, the term "faith" should not be used in connection with theoretical

¹³Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 30-40.

knowledge, whether it is a knowledge on the basis of immediate, prescientific or scientific evidence, or whether it is on the basis of trust in authorities who themselves are dependent on direct or indirect evidence.¹⁴

One can, therefore, conclude that the content of faith (*fides quae*), or that which is believed, is subject only to being believed or not, and is not the object of faith. The content of faith is thereby subject to analysis and examination as either true or false.

The voluntaristic distortion of faith, Tillich's second criticism, has to do with the "resolve" of faith, or the "Will-to-believe." This criticism of the distorted meaning of faith is a continuation of the first criticism. The resolve to believe presupposes that faith is understood as an act of knowledge with a limited evidence and that the lack of evidence is made up by an act of will. Thus "the content which is meant in the will to believe is given to the will by the intellect."¹⁵ For example, suppose that one has doubts about a particular proposition of the content of faith. He realizes that this assertion cannot be proved either by evidence or by trustworthy authority. There are, however, strong motives driving him to this assertion. He, therefore, decides (resolves) to believe and thereby make up in this way for the lack of evidence

¹⁴Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 36.

(self-deception). Tillich maintains that "If this belief is called 'faith,' it is a misnomer" ¹⁶

This same criticism is applicable to the term "obedience of faith." It will be recalled that obedience is central to the Biblicist position--"trust and obey." Tillich suggests that "obedience of faith" can mean the element of commitment which is implied in faith or it

. . . can mean subjection to the command to believe as it is given in prophetic and apostolic preaching. Certainly, if a prophetic word is accepted as prophetic, i.e., as coming from God, obedience of faith does not mean anything other than accepting a message as coming from God. But if there is doubt whether a "word" is prophetic, the term "obedience of faith" loses its meaning. It becomes an arbitrary "will to believe." ¹⁷

This criticism is applicable to the Biblicist in that faith is supposed to "cast out all doubt." That is to say, if one "truly" has faith there is no doubt about its content. Here, then, is the confusion of the "faith which is believed" and the "faith by which we believe." Since faith and doubt are opposed, for the Biblicist, they must simply resolve to believe despite discrepancy and/or contradiction. Thus one wills to believe "in spite of." This situation is a matter of self-deception.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

Christian Life in Terms of Beliefs

When faith is understood as belief and obedience the resulting Christian life tends toward legalism. The Bible as the primary content of faith is believed to be God's Word. And within this word are eternal truths revealed as doctrines and teachings. The Christian's task is to be obedient to these "eternal timeless truths." The Christian life consists in the assent to this particular content which serves as the sole norm for life. Being a Christian therefore, means believing certain things. If one believes and obeys ("works") then salvation is an assured reward ("righteousness").

Faith in faith. What the Biblicist position finally leads to is the basing of faith on faith itself. One's faith is based on faith in the Bible. Any critical response to the Bible is seen as an attack upon Christianity. Doctrines such as the "verbal inspiration" of the Bible, and the "infallibility" of the Bible come into full play. In these doctrines the ground of faith--the Bible--has been lifted out of history and beyond the reach of historical criticism. In a different way Bultmann also has removed the ground of faith from the arena of historical criticism.

The underlying attempt of this denial of the applicability of historical criticism is to protect faith from historical relativism. The assumption is that if faith is subject to historical research then it becomes dependent upon, or subject to it and varies as does the research. This was the reason that Kähler searched for an "invulnerable area" for the basis of faith independent of scientific investigation. It is also in the background of Bultmann's emphasis on the existential, rather than the historical, aspect of faith.

The historical character of faith. Christian faith, however, has always been known as an historical faith. That is to say, a faith grounded in an actual past event, notably, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And since this past event, which constitutes the content of faith (*fides quae*) is an event of history it is subject to historical criticism. As we say above the content of faith as "that which is believed" is subject to the charge of being either true or false. In the case of the Jesus of history these events have either actually happened or they have not. Therefore, as one writer has put it:

The believer cannot want to prohibit any historical question, no matter how it be fashioned. To do so would already tacitly admit that he had lost confidence that his faith was grounded in an actual past event. The believer can only trust that the facticity of the event on which he bases himself

will continually be upheld throughout the progress of historical research.¹⁸

The seriousness of historical research for the Christian is seen in the fact that it "is the only way of protecting the believer from the danger that something may be proclaimed and believed as being the message of Christ which may perhaps have little or nothing to do with Jesus himself."¹⁹ If the Christian faith is truly based on Jesus and if the kerygma is the witness to the saving significance of Jesus, then it is paramount that we turn to historical research for substantiation of the kerygma's witness.

SUMMARY

In both Bultmann and the Biblicist the content of faith is not subject to historical criticism. In Bultmann's case there is no content to be examined, for faith is based on the proclamation of the kerygma. However, in Bultmann's refusal to go behind the kerygma to the historical events subjects faith to the charge of being based on illusion or myth. This is the charge we expressed earlier. Without a historical base the kerygma is liable

¹⁸Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology, I, 56.

¹⁹Wolfhard Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 48.

to being mythology. Therefore, there is no means of securing the truth of faith. The Biblicist, on the other hand, maintains a content of faith, viz., the Bible, that is historical. But, this content is not subject to historical criticism because it is the "revealed truth" of God accepted by faith. Since the content of faith is the revelation of God in the Bible accepted as truth it cannot be examined by historical research. Here again, as for Bultmann, faith is without objective criterion for truth. In effect faith becomes the basis of itself, or produces itself.

If faith is not to fall prey to the charge of mere will to believe, the production of itself, or of being without substantiation of its claims, then it must be firmly rooted in history and open to historical investigation. A faith based on events that are accessible for investigation will serve to safe-guard against subjectivism and misinterpretation, and will employ an external factor for the substantiation of its claims. Such a faith will not demand blind acceptance on the basis of authority, but will solicit critical examination and reflective thought. It differs radically from the legalism of blind acceptance and leads rather to the freedom found in Christ Jesus.

Such an understanding of the nature of faith must now be examined.

Chapter V

JESUS, HISTORY, AND FREEDOM

As we saw in the preceding chapter both Bultmann and the Biblicist refuse to allow the basis of faith to be the object of historical analysis. This refusal is grounded in the assumption that faith loses its independence when bound to the results of historical research. This, they contend, would be to subject faith to the authority of science. Inevitably they conclude that "rational insight into the ground and content of faith . . . is injurious to the essence of faith. Faith . . . must remain a risk."¹ Wolfhard Pannenberg sets himself directly opposed to this view and argues that "the essence of faith must come to harm precisely if in the long run rational conviction about its basis fails to appear."²

This chapter therefore is concerned with an exposition of Pannenberg's understanding of the nature of faith and its consequences for Christian life.

¹Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," in his Basic Questions In Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), II, 28.

²Ibid.

THE BASIS OF THE ACT OF FAITH

For Pannenberg there is no question as to the idea that "faith must be understood as something effected by God himself."³ Rather:

The question is whether the Christian has the faith which he professes to have received from God himself, through the mediation of a supportable knowledge of the destiny of Jesus and its meaning, or whether his explanation that he owes his faith to God is only a subjective reassurance.⁴

In other words is the grounding of faith to be found in the individual, that is to say, a decision of faith, or is it to be found "outside myself" (extra me)? It is Pannenberg's intention to show that the basis or ground of faith is indeed "outside myself" and necessarily so.

Faith as Trust

Pannenberg begins by referring to the Reformation equation of faith and trust (*fiducia*). Here, he says, as in classical dogmatics, where the concept of faith includes the elements of knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*), "Knowledge of the content of faith remains the logical presupposition of the trust which is based upon it."⁵ "Faith therefore, cannot be without an object. In

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 30.

the act of trust a man forsakes himself and anchors himself to the thing or person on which he relies."⁶ This statement should not be read as though our faith or trust is in things--tangibles. Rather, Pannenberg insists:

. . . what one can see is only an indication and basis for trust. Where we rely on things or people, our trust is directed towards the very thing about them which is not yet externally evident.⁷

Our trust is not in the truth or falsity of any particular thing. This would be to confuse faith and belief. Thus for Pannenberg "faith really does have its center in trust and does not consist of holding this or that to be true."⁸

Nevertheless, faith and belief are inextricably related. Pannenberg writes:

. . . trust (faith) involves believing certain things to be true: from that it cannot be separated and without that it cannot exist . . . believing trust cannot be separated from the trusting person's belief in the truth of the thing in which he trusts and towards which his trust is directed.⁹

In other words the "object" of one's faith is believed to be true. But how is the truth of the object of faith shown?

⁶Wolfhard Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸Ibid., p. 6.

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

Every act of trust reaches backwards (or forwards) to a ground of trustworthiness in the object being relied on. The individual elements of this act can be distinguished, to be sure, but they cannot be isolated from one another without falsifying the essence of trust itself. To this extent, one is by all means entitled to understand the word faith, . . . in a wider sense, so that it also includes knowledge of the present ground of faith, corresponding to the concept of faith in classical Protestant dogmatics which comprised the elements of knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*). But even so, knowledge of the content of faith (*notitia* and *assensus*) remains the logical presupposition of the trust which is based upon it.¹⁰

In other words, the truth of the object of faith is related to the ground of one's trust. Pannenberg notes:

Trust cannot exist . . . without truth, that is to say, without presupposing the reliability of the thing to which it commits itself. Trust cannot exist without the truth of the pointers or indications on which it rests. It cannot exist without the reliability of the invisible reality on which it depends and which manifests itself in these indications.¹¹

The Historical Basis of Faith

Events that identify the "object" of faith, to wit, the Christ-event, provide the reason why the believer should put his trust in God.

The confidence with which the believer trusts here particularly, and not anywhere else, has its basis in the knowledge of what he trusts. This knowledge will certainly remain incomplete and provisional and open to doubt, since it is knowledge of a still invisible reality, derived from visible indications.

¹⁰Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 30.

¹¹Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 7.

But no trust is possible at all without a provisional judgment, based on indications of this kind, about the trust--worthiness and reliability of that on which I place my dependence.¹²

Therefore, the indications of the trustworthiness of the object of faith are indispensable, namely, the "historical facts." However these alleged "facts"--for example Jesus' resurrection--must be able to be believed as facts indeed. "Only then can they serve us as indications for a trust in this God--a trust based on them."¹³ But can we ever arrive at a final answer as to the truth of the facts? Would it not be more reasonable to withdraw from the substance and the statements of the kerygma and accept these truths by faith? Pannenberg's reply is without question--*Nein!* "Faith can breathe freely only when it can be certain even in the field of scientific research that its found is true."¹⁴ Therefore to retreat from historical research " . . . is not sensible because what these statements are about is precisely the primary foundation and substance of that faith."¹⁵

If the decision of faith must finally guarantee the historical truth of the ground of faith (viz., God's

¹²Ibid., p. 8

¹³Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁴Wolfhard Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.), Theology as History (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 131.

¹⁵Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 10.

revelation in Jesus), or if faith is rendered independent of the historical facts that constitute its foundation, faith ultimately depends upon the believer and the decision to believe, reducing faith to a work of self-redemption. When the decision of faith becomes the crucial factor for the truth of faith, the believer falls victim to the self-deception of salvation by works. In Pannenberg's words:

Whether the decision to believe has first to guarantee the truth of the facts on which trust in Jesus Christ and the God revealed in him depends, or whether faith is rendered independent of those facts, both come ultimately to the same thing: in both cases faith depends on the believer and this decision to believe, instead of on the factual substance in whose reliability he can trust. Where faith is understood and required in this sense--as a leap of blind 'decision' without further justification--it is degraded to a work of self-redemption. A faith which does not find its justification outside itself--i.e., from the thing on which it relies--remains imprisoned in its own ego and cannot be sustained.¹⁶

It is clear that Pannenberg is opposed to the "decision of faith" that becomes the ground and certainty with regard to the content of faith.¹⁷ Rather what is demanded is a penetration into the ground of the Christian faith.

Once this confidence in the factualness of the transmitted credal formulae has grown up, faith can trust in the certainty of its foundation, even though this confidence will never communicate itself without any element of doubt. Faith can then presuppose the

¹⁶Ibid., cf., p. 12.

¹⁷Cf., Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 31.

truth of the foundations which support it--even when it cannot entirely understand them and even though they may be obscured afresh through doubt. What is of decisive importance is that the believer remains aware of this premised truth as something foregiven to his faith; he cannot want to guarantee it by a decision of faith. And he must constantly ascertain the truth which he premises. At least he must be able to enjoy the confidence that it is possible to ascertain that truth, and that this is being done somewhere in the Christian church, in complete objectivity and honesty.¹⁸

The charge that subjecting the content of faith to historical criticism makes faith dependent on, or relative to this research is denied by Pannenberg. It is his contention rather that this research helps to correct preliminary and distorted representations of God.¹⁹ "Faith does not need to worry that this knowledge has been altered because of shifts in historical research, just as long as this current image of the facts of history allows him to reassess and to participate in the events that are fundamental to it."²⁰

Faith finds its basis in "the knowledge of God's revelation in history." Yet, it is not some particular formulation of the historical facts that constitutes the foundation of faith. Rather, the faith "relies on the God

¹⁸ Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 11.

¹⁹ Cf., Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in his Basic Questions in Theology, I, 53.

²⁰ Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation," in his Revelation as History (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 138.

who reveals himself in history." Thus changing results of historical research are not a threat to faith, but on the contrary provide the basis for "new and better understanding . . . which are the basis for . . . life."²¹

The importance of historical research is that it "is the only way of protecting the believer from the danger that something may be proclaimed and believed as being the message of Christ which may perhaps have little or nothing to do with Jesus himself."²²

THE LOGICAL PRIORITY IN FAITH

In Pannenberg's thought "knowledge of the ground of faith must, as such, logically precede faith"²³

The certainty of the ground or content of faith, however, is not, as for the Biblicist, to be established by a decision of faith.²⁴

. . . that the decision of faith is the ground of certainty with regard to the content of faith, . . . is precisely the conception of the relationship of knowledge (with assent) and faith that I must reject, because with that the founding of faith upon a truth

²¹Ibid., p. 139.

²²Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 48.

²³Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 32.

²⁴Cf., Wolfhard Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man (Philadelphia: Westminster Prews, 1968), pp. 26-28, 48, 109f.

"outside myself" (*extra me*) is in fact surrendered in favor of a self-grounding of faith.²⁵

This "self-grounding" of faith Pannenberg sees as a distortion of a correct understanding of Christian faith. The reverse of this is indeed the case in the New Testament. In Paul's writing he speaks of the grounding of faith upon knowledge.²⁶

The Ground of Certainty

This means, for Pannenberg, that "as act, the totality of faith cannot condition its content, but can at most condition the perception of its content."²⁷ In other words, the ground of certainty with regard to the content of faith is not established by a decision of faith. Rather, is it grounded upon knowledge.²⁸

This knowledge logically presupposed by *fiducia* is not distinguished from natural knowledge in Pannenberg's thought. As he himself puts it: "I admit that I cannot understand any knowledge as other than 'natural.'"²⁹ The underlying reason is that in the last analysis the truth of

²⁵Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 31.

²⁶Romans 6:8f, II Corinthians 4:13.

²⁷Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 31.

²⁸Cf., *Ibid.*, II, 41.

²⁹*Ibid.*, II, 33.

some special knowledge of faith could only be justified by a decision of faith. Referring to the New Testament as special knowledge of God is of no result in arguing for faith as special knowledge.

Nothing must mute the fact that the truth lies before everyone's eyes, that its perception is a natural consequence which emerges solely from the facts. (The perception of God's revelation in Christ) does not require an additional perfection of man, as though he could not focus upon such a "super-natural" truth with his normal cognitive facilities.³⁰

An argument for special knowledge only brings up the question of the truth of the message. For as Pannenberg argues:

When its (the Christian message) truth does not convince my power of judgment, then its acknowledgement becomes just a matter of decision, and thereby we return again to the ruinous consequences that faith grounds itself and so distorts that which is essential to it, viz., its dependence upon a truth outside itself.³¹

An appeal to the Holy Spirit to justify the truth of the message is of no consequences either, for Pannenberg. " . . . the appeal to the Holy Spirit is no help at all to the preacher."³² Pannenberg further suggests:

An otherwise unconvincing message cannot attain the power to convince simply by appealing to the Holy

³⁰Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on The Doctrine of Revelation," p. 132.

³¹Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 34.

³²Ibid., II, 35.

Spirit. The fact that one who is convinced by the message confesses that this apprehension was affected in him by the Holy Spirit must not be misunderstood as if the Spirit were to be the criterion of the truth of the message.³³

This is not to say that the Spirit has nothing to do with faith. But rather to say that "the Spirit does not join itself to the gospel as something additional,"³⁴ which could be conceived as a separate court of appeal exempting one from all accountability for its contents. Thus the truth of the Christian message can stem only from its content, "by referring to that whereof it reports and to the inherent meaning of the reported event."³⁵ This is an important point for Pannenberg. The New Testament witness did not superimpose a meaning on the Jesus of history.

The early Christian proclamation only unfolded the inherent meaning of Jesus' history in the language and the conceptualization of the time and the particular hearers. Sometimes it succeeded very well in expressing it, sometimes not. But it did not invent a meaning that was not already there.³⁶

Thus Pannenberg argues that faith must logically presuppose

³³Ibid., II, 34-35.

³⁴Ibid., II, 34, fn. 11.

³⁵Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," I, 35, cf., 39, 52. Cf., Wolfhard Pannenberg, "On Historical and Theological Hermeneutics," in his Basic Questions in Theology, I, 137-181, esp. pp. 137-161.

³⁶Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus," p. 128.

knowledge if it is not to be debased into a self-empowered decision.³⁷

The Knowledge of Faith

Faith then "has its basis in an event which is a matter for knowing and which becomes known to us only by more or less adequate information."³⁸ This is not to say that one comes to God by his own reason and strength, for faith is the response of man to God's revelation. "The events which reveal God and the message which reports these events bring man to a knowledge which he does not have in himself."³⁹ Though one cannot always comprehend the truth of the Christian message, one must be able to presuppose that the message about Jesus is true. Therefore, Pannenberg writes:

In the sense of a logical presupposition (though not always a psychological antecedent), the knowledge of Jesus' history, including his resurrection from the dead, is the basis of faith. Furthermore this knowledge has the peculiarity that it leads into faith--and the more exact it is, the more certainty it does so.⁴⁰

³⁷ Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," I, 35, cf., 39, 52.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus," p. 137.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

It is through the knowledge of Jesus' history that the "final revelation of God . . . is to be recognized by all peoples."⁴¹ The meaning inherent in Jesus' history is made explicit by Pannenberg when he writes:

One can understand the history of Jesus only if one understands the future salvation of mankind as having already appeared in and with him and as having been made accessible through him Therefore, those who penetrate into the meaning of Jesus' history will inevitably be led to God's not yet accomplished future, which nevertheless is held to have appeared already in and with Jesus, when one speaks of his resurrection from the dead. Hence through knowledge of Jesus' history they are led to faith, to trust in God's future.⁴²

In Pannenberg's thinking, "He who understands this meaning inherent in the history of Jesus is drawn, by knowing Jesus as the prolepsis of the coming general salvation, into the movement which is faith."⁴³

The nature of faith, Pannenberg argues, is such that "one does not trust blindly but on the basis of an event which can be appropriated as one considered reliable."⁴⁴ Thus the act of faith (*fides qua*) presupposes the trustworthiness of the knowledge of God's revelation in the Christ event. Otherwise, "faith would be blind gullibility, credulity or even superstition."⁴⁵

⁴¹Ibid., p. 130.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses On The Doctrine Of Revelation," p. 138.

⁴⁵Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus," pp. 130f.

Pannenberg would not want to say that "mere knowledge of the object of faith is capable of gaining a part in the saving event" rather that belongs to faith alone."⁴⁶

This is true because:

. . . only in the act of faith do I forsake my self in order to anchor myself in the reality in which I trust. In this act of trust, faith goes beyond its own criteria, abandoning not only self but even the particular form of knowledge of its object from which it started, and laying itself open to a new and better knowledge of the truth on which it relies.⁴⁷

Therefore, Pannenberg reasons:

Only when man relies upon this (knowledge of God's revelation) in that he trustingly takes this event as the ground on which he stands does he receive a share in that. Salvation is received only in the act of trust, which is essentially self-surrender, in the exact, literal sense of a placing of one's reliance entirely upon that to which one entrusts himself.⁴⁸

A Distinction Between *Fides Quae* and *Fides Qua*

Pannenberg is emphatic that "the knowledge of that which faith believes cannot displace the act of self-abandonment in trust."⁴⁹ This statement is given perspective when the Biblicist position is recalled. We saw

⁴⁶Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 12. Cf., Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 37.

⁴⁷Pannenberg, The Apostle's Creed, p. 12.

⁴⁸Pannenberg, "Insight and Faith," II, 37.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

there that the *fides quae*, or the "faith which is believed" is the primary understanding of the nature of faith. In other words the act of faith (*fides qua*) was subsumed under the knowledge of faith. Bultmann on the other hand subsumed the content of faith under the act of faith. But, for Pannenberg, there is a clear distinction between *fide quae* and *fide qua*. Faith is constituted by both poles in distinction yet in unity. The "faith which is believed" is not the faith and the "faith by which we believe" alone is not faith. The act of faith presupposes its basis on ground for its trust. The ground of faith would only be abstract without an act of commitment based on it. While the content of faith and the act of faith are distinct they are meaningless without each other.

A MODE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

Having described the nature of faith in Pannenberg's theology we now turn to the mode of Christian life that develops from this understanding. We will necessarily see the contrast between Pannenberg's view and the Biblicist understanding of the Christian life. Our attempt will be to point out the pitfalls in the Biblicist view that are the natural results of their understanding of the nature of faith.

There seem to be at least three basic contrasts between the Biblicist's position and that of Pannenberg. These are, obligation and freedom, action and motive, and morality and love.

Contrasting Positions

When the nature of faith and the Christian life are perceived in terms of obligation to particular modes of behavior and ethical demands, as for the Biblicist, one understands Christian existence paralleling the position of the Pharisees of the New Testament. Here the underlying assumption is that God has spoken in the past and thereby established the means and standard for our lives. Life is seen to be the result of our assent to believe the "eternal timeless truths" of the Bible. By believing in the words of God--the Bible--we not only find our salvation, but discover the norm for our life here and now. That is to say, the Bible presents itself as a "rule" book for behavior becoming to a follower of Christ.

There can be no doubt that Jesus understood man to owe God perfect obedience as did the Pharisee. But Jesus reacted strongly to their legalism. It was Jesus' intention to free the understanding of God's will from the archaic elements with which it had been entangled. For Jesus, the will of God, which deserves the full allegiance of all, was not equated with particular beliefs or rituals.

Was not Jesus continually confronted by the Pharisees for running counter to their well established and fixed beliefs? Was not Jesus' central concern with the motive for action rather than with action in and of itself?

Love was understood by Jesus as a motive, a state of feeling giving rise to willing and to action. Whereas in the case of the Biblicist the will to do the right thing is the self exemplification of love. This relation between motive and action is illustrated by John Cobb when he observes:

For both Jesus and the Pharisees, love was a matter both of action and of inner intention. Yet the relation between these altered in Jesus. For the Pharisee, the commands of God included the demand for purity of motive and purpose as well as righteousness of action. But these commands, like those which we could distinguish as ethical and ritual, lay side by side. Jesus attached a radical priority to the inner state. Since love was no longer to be expressed by obedience to many principles, it had to be a matter of the heart. Even righteous acts were worthless in God's sight if they were not motivated by love.⁵⁰

The Biblicist, with the presupposition of God's past revelation as norm and standard, finds himself searching for the will of God in terms of behavior in each new situation that arises in his life. He searches the Scripture for some applicable maxim ("eternal timeless truth"). In each particular instance the Scripture must be

⁵⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr., "Christ as the Image of Love," in his The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 114.

so interpreted as to designate some possible course of right action. At this point the individual must will to perform this action.

Behavior and Motive

When the Christian life is perceived in terms of obedience to the ethical demand (as an act of will), we are dealing only with behavior and not with motives. As we noted⁵¹ the Biblicist focuses attention on the actions of man, which can be governed, rather than on those uncontrollable, illusive motives behind actions. The contention is that to demand motives be pure is to demand the impossible. This is clearly the case when we understand ourselves in terms of "will." To will that one's motives be pure is only to show indifference or hostility in perversion. But Jesus did not understand human existence in terms of conformity to authority through the act of the will. Rather, he saw man as dependent on God's love and grace. Thus Jesus insisted that our intentions not only must be pure, but they could be pure. Our efforts are, as they have proved in themselves, of no avail in purifying our motives. Striving after righteousness is nothing but a perpetuation of self-salvation. We stand in need of and depend on God's grace.

⁵¹Supra, pp. 49ff.

The Pharisees, and the Biblicist as well, on the other hand, have focused their concern primarily on this effort of proving or justifying themselves leading to the attempt of self-salvation. By adhering to the "rules" (i.e., beliefs, doctrine, etc.) they await their expected salvation. Belief in the prescribed "truths" of the faith serve a twofold function. It provides the objective condition for salvation and the controlling norm of the Christian life to which the believer must adapt.

When faith is thus understood as assent to particular propositions of truth, the resultant Christian life manifests itself in adaptation to these "truths" in an ethical mode of existence. The Bible becomes the objective authority of faith and life. A legalistic system develops in order to provide rules to help us find the proper life. The Christian life becomes one of ethical decision making. There are considerable problems with this ethical life style as Cobb points out.

The ethical life is a burdensome one. It is hard to know what is right. There are so many claims upon us that seem justified that it is difficult to decide how to balance them against one another. We are always left with the sense that there is more to be done. We find ourselves driven and weighed down. Others sometimes find our dutiful and righteous action oppressive. We do not enjoy life, and others enjoy life less when we are around.⁵²

⁵²John B. Cobb, Jr., "Trusting and Deciding," in his Liberal Christianity At The Crossroads (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 71.

The question that must be asked is if the understanding of the Christian life exemplified by the Biblicist is not actually opposed to the message of Jesus. So understood there is little doubt that the Christian life conceived as belief in authority is a life that blocks freedom, openness, and the quest for truth. It would further seem that such a life is alien to the genius of Christianity. Is not the radical demand of God placed on a person within the context of God's love, such that we are not to think of objective conditions (propositions of belief, or particular behavior) that we must try to meet, but of the initiative of God's love coming to us and offering our salvation? Is not one's role to be open and receptive?

The emphasis of the Biblicist on right action (ethical striving) is, it seems, the reversal of the initiative of salvation. The legalism of the Biblicist functions as a means toward salvation--self-salvation. Recall the parable of Jesus in the New Testament where he tells of two men who go to the temple to pray--"one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector, I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying "God, be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for

every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.⁵³

It is not man's strivings that bring about salvation, but the love of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

From Obedience to Freedom

When faith is understood as trust in God on the basis of substantiated beliefs the emphasis shifts from blind obedience to freedom in the Christian life. This difference is due to the fact that the content of faith is not taken as the object of faith. When the content of faith--"that which is believed"--is equated with the object of faith--"that in which we trust"--it is natural for it to become the norm or standard of the Christian life. The content of faith becomes, as it were, "divine," the manifestation of the will and purpose of God. It is but a logical step to move from this to the understanding of faith as assent to these divinely revealed propositions of truth which are normative for our lives.

However, when the content of faith is not also the object of faith, but rather the grounds of the trustworthiness of the object of faith. The Christian life is not centered in assent to propositional truths. The Christian life, rather finds its focus in openness to God and freedom

⁵³Luke 18:9-14.

of response. The Biblicist would certainly insist that freedom is a central aspect in his understanding of the Christian life as well. There is, however, a basic and unmistakable difference in the understanding of freedom in the Christian life depending on one's conception of the nature of faith. If we substitute "Biblicist" for "Pharisee" in the following quote from John Cobb this distinction will be evident.

For the Pharisee, the individual man was free to do or not to do what God required of him. For Jesus, the individual man was free to be or not to be what God wanted him to be. Of course, for the Pharisee and Jesus alike, what one was and what one did were inseparable. But whereas for the Pharisee one was what one did, for Jesus one acted in terms of what one was. The freedom to be what one willed to be was a far greater freedom; . . . than the freedom to do what one wanted to do.⁵⁴

A Christian life arising out of trust rather than a resolve to believe, is a life manifested in freedom. The character of this life is such that we are open to the call of God in free response.

When we free ourselves from the blinders of habit and prejudice and the burden of moral rules, there is a deeper level of our moral being that grasps directly what is right and appropriate. In terms of this we can critically evaluate our actions.⁵⁵

Cobb notes that Alfred North Whitehead pointed to this basic

⁵⁴Cobb, The Structure of Christian Existence, p. 116.

⁵⁵Cobb, "Trusting and Deciding," in his Liberal Christianity at the Crossroads, p. 75.

fact of ethical experience when he wrote that there is a universal "intuition of immediate occasions as failing or succeeding in reference to the ideal relevant to them. There is a rightness attained or missed with more or less completeness or attainment or omission."⁵⁶

The Christian life that one reads of in the New Testament as the work of the Spirit of God is one manifested in Freedom. This freeing aspect of the Christian life is explicated by Cobb in the following manner.

. . . in the New Testament the work of the Spirit is known much more as freedom. Man was free from the law, because he could live immediately from the grace that was the Spirit. He did not need to struggle to obey imposed principles of conduct, because his heart was changed. Those principles were now either set aside as irrelevant or accepted as the spontaneous expression of the new heart that he found within himself as the work of the Spirit. Man was freed from his own past, because the Spirit placed him on a new level of existence in which that past had no power over him. Man was free from the oppressive powers of this world, the structures within the context of which he had understood his existence, because he now lived in terms of a reality that radically transcended and relativized them. He knew Christian existence, therefore, as joy rather than as burden.⁵⁷

It is the contention of this dissertation that the mode of Christian life most clearly expressed in Jesus' message is not one of conformity to certain ethical

⁵⁶Alfred North Whitehead, Religion In the Making (New York: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 60-61. Quoted by Cobb,

⁵⁷Cobb, The Structure of Christian Existence, p. 122.

standards, or adherence to a particular set of beliefs or dogma, but rather than mode of life in which we are open and free to respond to the life situation in the manner indicated in the gospel--love.

CONCLUSION

The guiding thesis of this dissertation has been that one's conception of the nature of faith is fundamental to the mode of Christian life. In other words, this dissertation argues that the nature of faith is determinative of the Christian life. Therefore, two alternative approaches to the nature of faith have been examined. The first was a non-propositional view represented by Rudolf Bultmann, and second the propositional approach of the Biblicist.

Faith is understood basically as a mode of existence in Bultmann's non-propositional view. The mode of one's existence being central, rather than any particular body of doctrine or propositional content. To insist that faith means believing certain things is, for Bultmann, an attempt at false security. Faith must rather be a "radical commitment" to the Word. One is suspended in mid-air and cannot demand objective proof for faith. Bultmann's contention is that the ground and object of faith are identical. It follows, therefore, that if God cannot be objectified, or made an object of human analysis, that faith is without any objective ground in this sense of objective. Faith, then,

is not concerned with particular propositions of belief, but rather is concerned with the existential response one makes to the proclamation of the Word. Thus Bultmann has subsumed the content of faith (*fides quae*) under the act of faith (*fides qua*).

The difficulty with this position is that without an historical basis or ground of faith independent of the act of faith faith becomes liable to the charge of myth, or self-fabrication. To focus attention on the mode of existence as the central factor in faith is to leave unanswered the question of why one has faith. There does seem to be some cognitive aspect to faith--some propositional beliefs that are necessary.

An alternate approach to faith is the propositional view. Biblicists understand faith as based on the propositional content of the Bible. To have faith is to believe in the divine authority of the Bible. The Christian life finds its norm or standard in the authoritative doctrine and dogma of the Bible. This mode of life, as response to authoritarian rules, tends toward legalism. Each particular situation of life is matched to pre-established rules of behavior. These rules are derived from various interpretations of Holy Scripture and stand above reproach. To question the authority of the Bible in all matters of life and faith is to clearly demonstrate one's wavering in the faith.

In the Biblicist position this primary emphasis on assent to the "truths" of the Bible forms not only the content of faith, but also establishes the act of faith. In principle the Biblicist agrees with Bultmann that the ground and object of faith are identical. However, while Bultmann subsumed the content of faith under the act of faith, the Biblicist subsumed the act of faith under the content of faith. The result is the confusion of faith and belief in both Bultmann and the Biblicist.

Wolfhard Pannenberg, on the other hand, maintains a distinction between faith and belief, but not an absolute separation. Pannenberg argues, as does Bultmann, that faith is trust in God. He further argues that the trust must be based on belief, as does the Biblicist. However, the trust of faith is not to be identified with the belief of faith. Belief is not trust, although it is a necessary element in trust. Belief is logically prior to trust. Belief constitutes the ground of faith and is open to historical research as either true or false. One's trust in the faithfulness of God is based on rational grounds in history. Thus, for Pannenberg, there is a clear distinction between *fides quae* and *fides qua*, although not an absolute separation. For just as faith without personal appropriation of its content would be dead, so a faith without content would be empty and abstract.

The question that remains to be considered concerns the relation of the mode of Christian life to faith understood as trust based on substantiated belief. In this understanding the nature of faith is seen to have a contextual character. That is to say, faith is the free response to a particular situation. The life situation presents itself for one's consideration. One's considered response is in the manner which seems most appropriate to, or the one "demanded" by, that situation. In other words faith is a mode of existence. To live in faith is to respond freely and openly to life in love. If this is indeed the case it is instructive for the way in which one makes moral and ethical decisions.

If faith is the mode of Christian life, then the way in which one makes decisions should reflect this mode of life. One's initial faith in God revealed in Jesus was made in consideration of the meaning and significance of the Christ event. Thus one's response was freely determined in light of that particular situation. Is this not the paradigm for one's moral and ethical decisions in daily life? Is one not to respond to each particular in light of its own meaning and significance and stand responsible for that decision? Surely to look to authoritarian rules, or pre-established values is to thwart the creativity and responsibility of the Christian life.

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